

**"tell it
to the
Chaplain"**

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Tell It to the Chaplain

Tell It to the Chaplain

by Robert Chapman
Former Chaplain in the U. S. Army



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FIRST EDITION

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Tell It to the Chaplain

• 1 •

I Join the Army

THERE are some nine or ten million young men in the United States today who will argue the point with me; nevertheless, I insist that getting into the Army was a hard job. It may have come easy to some, but I worked at the assignment for nearly three years before I finally succeeded in getting them to take me in. It all started back in 1940, just a few months after Hitler had started the fireworks in Europe. At that time I was in my freshman year in seminary and had attained the ripe age of twenty-one . . . going on twenty-two. I do not claim that my zeal to become part of somebody's army was prompted by any great patriotism or heroism. I am not self-psychoanalyst enough to know if it was bona fide patriotism, a yearning for adventure, an ambition to earn my own money, or the fact that I had just been rejected by a little blonde. I convinced myself that it was because of my ambition to help the cause of democracy no matter where that cause was imperiled.

Soon after the blonde sent back my high school class pin, I began sending letters to the Secretaries of War and Navy. I mentioned my age, my education, my family background, my abhorrence of Hitler, and my love of country, but not the blonde. Could they take me in as a chaplain? I asked. In due time the letters returned, not from the heads of the departments to which I had written, but from noncommissioned officers in the procurement branches. I was informed that the Army and Navy had to maintain some kind of standards, after all, and that for that reason they could not accept me. They also sent along a list of requirements for chaplains. From this I learned that I would have to complete my seminary training and wait until I could count at least twenty-four summers. And that was that.

I didn't take well to the idea of letting this boiling passion for self-sacrifice bubble around in my breast for the next three years. If my own country wouldn't have me, I thought, perhaps one of the Allies would. I sent letters to proper officials in Canada, and one to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in our country at the time. Canada candidly replied that if I wanted to join up there, I would have to cross the border, renounce my American citizenship and become a fullfledged Canadian. That cooled my clamor for Canada. Soon after this a letter came from Lord Halifax himself. He graciously thanked me for my offer but patiently explained that the British, too, had some standards to maintain.

Well, it looked as if all my efforts to get into the war immediately were pretty well knocked out unless I were willing to make some sacrifices that I wasn't willing to make. I decided that the best thing for me to do was to go right on with my seminary work and wait until I was old enough to be accepted by the Army or the Navy. Anyway, I had just met a gorgeous little nurse, a brunette. There was nothing more that I could do but let nature take its course and hope that the war wouldn't end before I got old enough to get in it.

In December 1941, when the United States was drawn into the war, I tried again. I wrote to the Army and Navy, suggesting that since we were in the war ourselves now, it might be the better part of wisdom if they relaxed their requirements just enough to allow me to get in. Again they informed me that, war or no war, emergency or no emergency, they wouldn't lower their standards *that* much.

Seeing no way out of my dilemma, I graduated from seminary in June 1942, moved to Florida, joined the Methodist Conference of that state, and married the nurse in August. In September my long period of waiting came to an end; I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday. That night I wrote to the Army, telling them their worries would soon come to an end. I had my degree and I had my age, and now I was giving them one more chance to acquire my services and assistance as a chaplain. Please make careful note of this fact. I sent them my application in September 1942. Not until August 1943 was I sent my commission and told when and where and how I was to report to the Chaplains' School at Harvard University for a period of training. Of course, there were a good many things to take care of, such as my endorsement by my denomination, my physical examination, and a thorough investigation of my character by the F.B.I. to make sure that I wasn't a spy and that I had never subscribed to the *World Peace Newsletter*. But from all the reports that came to me at the time, the need for chaplains was very great, and it seemed to me that I could have been received into the Army in less than eleven months. It surely didn't take that long to snatch some of the boys off the farms, out of the factories, and away from the schools. The trouble lay, of course, in the fact that I had volunteered. I should have known that would create suspicion.

To get back to where we were: When I received my commission I was given two weeks' time in which to wind up all my church and personal affairs and report to Harvard. I immediately notified the church officials that I was departing and

began to close shop. It was my plan to take the wife over to Daytona Beach, Florida, and let her stay with her mother and father while I was away defending home and country. We loaded all our worldly goods into the car, said our farewells to the people of Webster, and drove to Daytona Beach.

The WACs had taken over Daytona Beach . . . the hotels, the stores, the streets, and what men were available. And it so happened that my introduction to Army life came by way of these WACs. The day after I arrived in Daytona Beach, I went down to the WACs' headquarters to meet their chaplain. I was still dressed in civilian clothes, so that walking past a group of WACs gave me no qualms whatever. The results of my visit to the WACs' chaplain were: I was assured that I must buy a uniform immediately, complete with silver bar and insignia. Also, I was introduced to a little military courtesy. The chaplain, who was a major, informed me that I should walk on his left; and that I should go ahead and open the door for him, and wait until he had gone through the door before I followed, except when we were getting out of a car—in that case, I was to open the door and get out first. Officers always got in on the right-hand side of a car, he continued, and always sat on the back seat. (This particular rule was not followed too closely, however, since most of the drivers were WACs.) At the end of the interview the chaplain insisted that I buy a uniform that day and meet him at one of the WAC encampments the following Sunday to assist him in a religious service. Since he was now my superior officer, there was no choice for me but to agree to come.

When Sunday came, I leaped out of bed at five o'clock in the morning, gulped down a cup of strong coffee for reinforcement, and took up a job that I had started the night before. I was trying to get my insignia on my shirt collar just the way the book said it had to be. The chaplain's cross had to be on the left side of the collar wing, just so far from the edge and

so far from the seam, and slanted at just the right angle. The first lieutenant's bar had to be placed in exactly the same manner but on the right wing of the collar. I had started this little job with my shirt off and got the insignia looking just right. But whenever I put the shirt on and buttoned the collar, one or the other of the insignia was always out of line. So off the shirt would come for more arrangements and alignments—then back on again for another try. This process was repeated without success until I collapsed and my wife had to drag me off to bed. But I was at it again at daybreak the next morning. I worked frantically up to the last minute before I gave up. I never did get those insignia matched evenly.

My wife drove me downtown to the WAC encampment, where I was supposed to meet the chaplain. I got out of the car in front of the gate leading into the encampment. My wife waited to see if I would be allowed to go in, before she drove on back home. I felt so flustered and scared, this being the first time I had appeared in public in my uniform, that I didn't know if I was coming or going. I wouldn't have felt more conspicuous if I were walking down the street naked.

There were two WACs on duty at the gate. When I had stumbled up to within about ten feet of them, they leaped to attention and slung me a salute that would have done honor to General Marshall. Now, by gum! I claim that wasn't a fair way to get your first salute. I was still a civilian, uniform or no uniform, and when a couple of ladies jumped up and started saluting all over the place just because I had walked up, it took all the military wind out of my sails. I stood there for a moment, just gawking at them. Then I remembered that I was an officer in Uncle Sam's Army and was expected to act like one. But I had been a Boy Scout too long, and when I returned their salute, it was a genuine Boy Scout salute that I gave them. I knew that wasn't right, so I started all over. This time I used my left arm. That didn't work either. I wound

up by doing what I knew I should have done at the start. I took off my cap and asked them if this was the place where the chaplain was supposed to hold a religious service. Those girls didn't laugh at me, bless their little hearts! They said I was in the right place and could go on into the chapel. I turned to call to my wife that she could go on, but she had been watching me and was now laughing so hard at my embarrassment that she couldn't see me. Indignant that she should find such side-splitting humor in my pathetic situation, I stalked into the camp without telling her good-bye.

I made it through the day without receiving any visible wounds, but inwardly I was crushed. If I hadn't already signed my name to the dotted line I would have called the whole thing off right then and there.

Instead of calling it all off, I went down to the railway station and made reservations for my trip to Harvard. The following Monday afternoon all the family came with me to the station to see me off. It was a grave occasion. You see, I had recently received a communication from the adjutant of the Chaplains' School informing me that it would be wise for me to make all possible final settlements of my property, draw up my will, and see that my insurance was paid, and mentioning a few other details that a person ought to check into before leaping off the Empire State Building. You can imagine how that struck me—new, raw, uninitiated recruit that I was. I didn't have any better sense than to believe just what the adjutant said. And of course I had to read into his letter something that wasn't there but that he meant for me to read into it just the same: "Pack your grip, bub, you won't be in this country long!" With all these things buzzing around in my new Army bonnet, you couldn't exactly expect me to be doing handsprings from joy. I struck one of those strong, silent, sorrowing poses and held it pretty well. My wife wasn't any too gay herself. After all, she was expecting. (Now, isn't that

a heck of a term? Expecting! She could have been expecting the mailman, the delivery boy, or her sewing machine; or expecting me to start giving her a little spending money. But who am I to quibble with terms? That's the way it has always been said, so I will say it that way too.) The idea of my going overseas just to get mixed up in a little ol' war while she stayed at home and had the baby all by herself made her feel like a martyr. I tried to tell her there wasn't much I could do about the baby now, anyway, but she remained angry at Uncle Sam. And so we sat, silent and sullen, until we heard the train whistle blow. Then I started scrambling around like mad, getting my things together and trying to say all the things I had been trying to say to her for three years, only this time I had only three minutes. I wound up by saying, "I love you." I thought that was pretty silly, then—not that it was silly that I loved her, but that I couldn't think of a more romantic way to say it. Now I know that when you blow all the chaff away, those three words are the kernel of the whole business of life.

When I got on the train and found my Pullman car and section, I was elated to discover that there was an Army captain sharing the section with me . . . I saw that on his baggage, which was addressed to Mitchell Field, New York. But the captain was not in at the moment. This will be fine, I said to myself, I will have all the way to New York to talk to this fellow about the Army. I was sure that he would be able to give me some good hints and suggestions. I made up my mind that I was going to tell him I was a greenhorn. There was no use pretending otherwise. Anybody could tell I didn't feel right in a uniform. Even the newspaper boy in the train station had startled me by calling me a "shavetail," whatever that was. There wasn't the slightest reason to hope that I could banter Army slang around with a captain.

After the train had pulled out of the station, the Army captain returned to his seat. You can imagine my surprise

when I saw that "he" was a she. My section companion was a WAC captain. Oh, brother, and after that mixup I had just had with the WACs the day before! That knocked my plans for a general confession-and-sharing session out the window. I had a pleasant trip to New York with the lady captain, but I hadn't then learned to view lady officers as officers and not as ladies. And being an old line Southern Gentleman who hardly speaks to a woman unless he is formally introduced, I didn't get too chummy with this lady on the trip. (By the way, a year and a half later I myself was sent to Mitchell Field, where I learned that this particular WAC officer had been promoted to the rank of major and had promptly committed suicide. I never could figure that one out.)

Chaplains' School turned out to be an ordeal. I had to get up at five o'clock in the morning, make my own bed (Army style), put on a spanking-clean uniform (complete with insignia, properly placed), and rush out into the yard, where we were inspected by a sleepy-eyed corporal. The whole six weeks of my time at Chaplains' School was one great confusion of classes, drills, exercises, marches, sore feet, aching backs; learning that all drill sergeants know four words of Latin, which they use in giving cadence for marching soldiers; and having the fear of superior officers, especially commanding officers, drilled into me. I finally came to the conclusion that God himself would have to get permission from the commanding officer of a camp before He held a religious service or rendered moral assistance to a soldier. This belief was backed up by a certain story that was told around the school. In a certain camp there was a commanding officer who came to chapel services not to worship but to see if the chaplain said anything in his sermon that was contrary to the commanding officer's policies and opinions. During his prayer one Sunday the chaplain asked that God pardon His people for their mistakes. Whereupon the commanding officer leaped to his feet

and bellowed at the chaplain, "I'll have you know I don't make any mistakes!"

This fear of superior officers was given a humorous touch on the final day in Chaplains' School. It was graduation day, and I learned that all graduating classes, from those composed of Army chaplains down to the senior class in the little red schoolhouse on Possum Creek, Alabama, have to get their pictures taken. We new chaplains were corralled on the drill field, and along with the faculty of the school, were told to form in ranks six deep. The tallest men were told to get in the back row and arrange themselves from left to right according to their height. Now, it so happened that we had one chaplain from Florida who was very tall and who also thought he was very funny. When the taller men started taking their places, this chaplain, who was just a first lieutenant, went to the head of the line without even looking to see if any other man there was taller than he was. Another chaplain then came over and took his place ahead of the Florida chaplain, thus indicating that he thought he was the taller man. It was impossible for the Florida chaplain to see the other chaplain's insignia before he blurted out, "Why, man, what are you talking about? Get on down in the line where you belong. I'm so much taller than you, I could lick molasses off the top of your head!" The chaplain to whom this banter was addressed turned so that all could see his insignia, and calmly replied, "I believe I am the taller." And he was. He was a colonel.

When I got back to my quarters that evening, I learned that orders had come in for me. With trembling hands I opened the envelope and read my doom. I had been assigned to the Fourth Air Force and was to report there immediately. The headquarters of the Fourth Air Force was in San Francisco, and I was pretty happy over the opportunity of getting

to go out and see what California looked like. So one fine morning in late September 1943 I found myself walking down the streets of San Francisco, gawking at the funny little street cars, the many Orientals, and the women. But I couldn't tarry long. I had business to attend to in the office of the staff chaplain of the Fourth Air Force.

My First Assignment

WHEN I knocked at the door marked STAFF CHAPLAIN, a voice from the inside called out, "Come in." I opened the door and beheld a dried-up little Army officer sitting behind a very large desk. The first thing I saw was his bald head. When my eyes grew accustomed to the glare I noticed that he was wearing a colonel's insignia. That almost took the starch out of my collar. I had seen colonels before. As a matter of fact, I had even been on the same elevator with one once. But this was the first time that I had ever been in the same office with one who was about to transact Army business with me. All the instructions I had received at Chaplains' School as to how I should conduct myself when interviewing a commanding officer came flooding into my mind: *Always take your hat off. Stand at attention. Hold your hat in your left hand. Use these words: "Chaplain Blank reporting for duty,*

sir." Then don't say any more or do anything until he says you can. And so on. But it was all wasted effort, as far as I was concerned. I was so flustered that I snatched my hat off with my left hand, put all my papers on top of my head, and said to the colonel, "Don't speak until you are spoken to." Thank heavens the colonel was also a chaplain! And thank somebody that he also had seen quite a number of other chaplains come through that same door. He just returned what was supposed to be my salute and asked me to be seated. That I did quickly and with great relief.

After a few questions and pleasantries about where my home was, how long I had been in service (as if he couldn't tell!) and how glad (groan!) he was to have me in his command, the chief got down to the business of the interview.

"We have decided to send you to Pinedale, a camp about two hundred miles south of here," the colonel remarked.

"Pinedale," I grinned back at him (I was beginning to feel quite cozy with him). But I little dreamed that I was about to step into a nightmare of horrors.

"Yes. You'll like the place," continued the chief. "It's really a swell place."

That was a dead giveaway that trouble was brewing in the old pot for me, but my untrained ears failed to catch the warning. Later I was to learn that any time a commanding officer refers to an assignment he is about to send you on as "swell," he really means another word that rhymes with it. I had my mouth opened, all prepared to ask him where it was, what it was, when I would be sent there, and a few other equally unimportant questions. But I never got the chance.

"I've already arranged reservations for you on the 1800 train," the colonel informed me. "You had better be off now. Be at the station at 1745."

I leaped to my feet, sending my hat and armful of orders and other assorted papers showering to the floor. "Yes, sir," I snapped, showing him just how military I could be.

The chief stood up and started to the door. My agile mind suddenly arrived at the conclusion that the interview was over. He was showing me out. I had been in his office exactly four minutes. In those four minutes my young life had been taken and set in a new direction—a direction that would lead to experiences that would determine what remained of what I hoped would be a long and useful life.

The door was opened and I walked out—without even a chance to salute, as the drill sergeant had patiently taught me I must do.

“Good luck,” the chief said. “You’ll need it. Don’t forget to take your calisthenics every day.”

The door shut behind me. I was on my way.

As I started out the front door, I had a brilliant idea. I turned to the guard who was stationed at the entrance of the building. “Say, soldier . . .” When I spoke to him, he jerked to attention with such ferocity that it frightened me. I leaped back in fear that he might be about to whack me across the bean with his bayonet. But he didn’t do anything rash, so I edged back up to him. “Say, soldier,” I started all over, “what did the colonel mean when he said I should be at the train at 1745?”

I know now what that soldier must have thought, but he showed no sign of his contempt then.

“Sir, the colonel meant that you should be at the station at 1745 hours; that is, at five forty-five P.M.”

“Oh,” I said very meekly, “then I suppose I am to catch the train to Pinedale tonight.”

Despite his totem pole position, the guard managed to repeat in an incredulous voice. “Pinedale? Sir, did I understand you to say you were going to Pinedale?”

“Yes.”

“Are you being assigned there, sir?” He was still incredulous.

“Yes.” I was beginning to smell a rodent. “Why?”

"Oh nothing, sir. Nothing at all. But I was just thinking—if the Chaplain will excuse me—you are so young-looking."

"What about it?" I asked growing more curious. "Is Pinedale the Army's old-age home?"

The guard hastened to reassure me. "Oh, no, sir, nothing like that. I was just thinking that what is about to happen to you ought not to happen to anyone."

By this time he had relaxed enough so that he was looking at me as if he were St. Peter and I were the world's worst sinner scratching at the Pearly Gates. I was afraid to hear more, so I thanked him and went on my way.

As I walked along the streets of San Francisco, I began to receive salutes from enlisted men I passed. There is nothing like a few brisk salutes from crisp-looking soldiers to inflate a deflated ego. It makes you feel like a king whose subjects are knocking their heads on the floor in your honor. With each salute my morale went higher and higher. By the time I reached my hotel I was really in the pink. Pinedale couldn't possibly be that bad. That guard was just a "goof-off" who had gotten himself into trouble. Naturally, he wouldn't like the camp. It was more than likely that he had been kicked out of the camp because he didn't show the proper appreciation for its intrinsic beauty and loveliness. Beauty . . . ah, yes. Surely, a place with a name like that had gently swaying pine trees. Everywhere there would be gracefully rolling, grass-covered hills. Of course, there would be a cool stream running close by to give a flavor of freshness and cleanness to the air. And then in my imagination I saw the camp itself . . . long, shaded, adobe barracks, around which soldiers lolled in the shade and listened to the song of the wind in the pines. Richly colored flowers bordered all the buildings, streets, and walkways. Overhead, huge Army bombers (I was in the Air Force, so there must be bombers there) droned and rolled lazily in the azure sky. Pinedale! The

very word had music in every letter. What a place to spend the war! And to think that Sherman had said that war was . . . well, he had thought so anyway. But he had never seen Pinedale.

Believe it or not, I caught the 6 P.M.—I mean the 1800—train (I've got to watch that civilian talk, and I wish you would remind me of it when you see me slip into some despised civilian lingo). I arrived in the city of Fresno about 2200. One of the chaplains met me at the station and drove me out to the camp, some seven miles away. Three times during the space of the brief ride I asked him to tell me something about Pinedale. All he would say was, "Wait and see for yourself." Of course he didn't actually say anything—but it was just his not saying anything which aroused some very grave anxieties in my overly suspicious mind.

The chaplain said that he had arranged for me to sleep that night in one of the temporary barracks. The next day I would be assigned to a room called the B.O.Q. (sometimes lengthened to "B.O. Quarters" by the enlisted men who had to clean it up), in one of the other barracks. When I went into the barracks where I was to sleep that night, I could see for myself that it was a temporary building—so temporary in fact, that I was not at all sure that it would be there when I awoke the next morning. The front screen door had already decided that it was time to move and had, on its own initiative, partly disconnected itself from the door facing. It remained suspended by about as much as holds up my wife's strapless evening gown. The floor of the building had several large spaces between the boards. Those spaces weren't altogether accidental in origin. One look at the roof—of a cheap tar paper, as were the walls—showed that one could count the stars from one's bed and that a shelter half would be a very good thing to have in case of rain. The cracks in the floor took care of indoor drainage.

I finally reached the cubbyhole euphoniously called "my room." It consisted of three pieces of heavy cardboard nailed on a wooden framework in such a manner as to form two side walls and one front wall. The side of the building served as the fourth wall. The cardboard partition made a wall about five feet high. It was one foot off the floor and lacked two feet of reaching the ceiling. The door was just a hole cut in the front partition. These walls created the sensation that I was sleeping in a shower stall. On several occasions when I switched on the overhead light, I ducked for fear that I had thoughtlessly turned on the shower. Afterwards I always felt foolish about this.

There were two single cots and one table made from an old crating box as furniture in the room. No chair, no rug, no closet; not even a nail in the wall. But luckily I was the only occupant for the night, so I put my clothes on the extra cot. I slept that night from sheer exhaustion—physical, mental, and emotional.

The next morning was October 1, and I awoke to greet the new day at the crack of dawn simply because a bunch of two-ton trucks kept racing down a road just outside my window. Yes, I awoke, in more ways than one.

By the time I had dressed and walked across a hundred yards of ankle-deep dust to the latrine (given prestige by a sign over the door which read: OFFICERS' LATRINE) to shave, it was light enough for me to see all around the camp. I looked—and my whole soul looked with me. What I saw stunned me—and stunned my whole soul. There wasn't a tree . . . not even one scrawny little pine. There wasn't any grass . . . not even one bold little blade. There were no flowers. There was nothing, nothing I had looked for and dreamed of. But there was dust—everywhere. The ground was flat. It was red. It was all covered with two or three inches of powdery dust that whirled up in little clouds around your feet when you walked.

The streets were marked only by a ditch on either side and by the tracks the trucks left in the dust. All around me were buildings—all of them “temporary” buildings like the one I had slept in. There was more tar paper collected there than I had ever seen in one place in all my life.

Just then a truck came down the road. Behind it billowed out a great dense cloud of dust, a perfect smoke screen. A group of ten or twelve soldiers slushed by me. I supposed they were soldiers. The dust rose so thick from their feet that all I could see was the dim outlines of their shoulders and heads.

I don't know how long I stood there. I was having a terrific fight within myself. All my dreams and imaginings . . . my fondest hopes about my new assignment . . . crumbled to the powdery dust in which I stood. It was a terrific shock. Instead of a garden I had found a desert. Instead of trees I had found desolation. Instead of lovely buildings I had found “temporary structures.” Everything was so different. Everything was so backward from the way it should have been. This was Pinedale.

As my stunned senses began to convince my mind that this was real, that I was actually awake and not suffering in a horrible nightmare, a very mean and ugly thought crept into my mind. I recalled that the chief had wished me good luck and then had added, “You'll need it.” And that guard . . . I knew now why he had looked at me with such pity. He had seen Pinedale. “What's about to happen to you shouldn't happen to anyone”—that's what he had said. I could see myself gradually choking to death in this dust. Or maybe I wouldn't die that easily. Maybe the dust would gradually cut away my lungs like sandpaper, and I would die a slow, horrible death with heavings, coughing, and painful convulsions. I would suffer excruciating pain until sweet death finally released me from my miseries. The very thought frightened me. I couldn't face it, I said. I wouldn't stand for it. I was too young to die—like

that, anyway. I would leave. I would escape. It would be easy. After all, Stalin had escaped from the salt mines of Siberia. I could manage this.

Then the good angel started talking back. Where would I go? What would my wife think? What could I tell my children in the years to come? Could I tell them that I had dared to fight the Japs at Guadalcanal, I had charged the beaches of Tarawa, and I had routed the Germans at Cassino—but I had broken down in the Battle of Pinedale? What would they think? And what would these men at Pinedale think? They had to stay . . . dust or not. They had to choose between the agonies of Pinedale and the firing squad. Was I less a man than any of them? No! I would stay. I wouldn't choose the firing squad, either. I wouldn't take the easy way out. I was at Pinedale and here I would remain so long as this old body held together.

Well, after that terrific battle I felt the need of physical nourishment, so I felt my way through the dust clouds to the mess hall. They had rigged fans in the windows there to blow the dust away from the building. This made the visibility fairly good inside, and I was able to find a table without too great difficulty. When I sat down I noticed that there was dry cereal and milk already on the table. I ate this, and after several futile attempts, finally managed to snare a waiter. My experiences of the morning had taken a heavy toll of my energies and I felt the need of a good, hearty breakfast. So I told the waiter, who was an enlisted man, to bring me some toast, coffee, and ham and eggs.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I'm not allowed to do that."

"This is a mess hall, isn't it?" I still was not too sure I was in the right place.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you have ham and eggs, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why aren't you allowed to serve me?"

"Because, sir, you are on the wrong side of the mess hall."

"I'm what . . . ?"

"On the wrong side." He could tell by the look on my flabbergasted pan that I didn't understand, so he continued. "On this side of the mess hall we serve only cereal and milk. If you want the regular breakfast, you must sit on the other side."

It all soaked in, but slowly.

I tried again. "If I move over there, can I have ham and eggs?"

"Not this morning, sir," he answered briskly.

"Why?"

"We have only hot cakes this morning."

My usually gentle nature was about to get disturbed. "All right. All right. I'll move over there and you can bring me hot cakes, dust cakes, mud cakes . . . anything you have . . . just so it's something I can eat."

Then the waiter almost apologized. "I'm sorry, sir, but we can't serve you hot cakes this morning." He said it gently but firmly.

I didn't answer. It didn't help much to question him. Perhaps if I just let him alone, I thought, I would get the story. Sure enough, here it came.

"The mess hall closes at eight o'clock, sir. And while we have been talking, that time has come and gone. It is now too late for me to serve you anything."

What would you have done? Several ideas occurred to me, mayhem not being the least of them.

Around Camp

A FEW days after I had arrived at Camp Pinedale and had become accustomed to seeing tar-paper buildings before my eyes all the time, I decided to take a walk around the camp to see if anything interesting was going on. I walked down one of the dust lanes, known as a "street" only because a sign at its end so designated it. I had not gone very far before I came upon the familiar scene of a sergeant giving a private a very thorough going-over. When I got within earshot I heard something like this (parts of the sergeant's remarks are of necessity censored):

"How many times have I told you not to throw cigarette butts on the ground?" bawled the sergeant.

No answer came from the private.

Catching his breath, the sergeant continued, "You blue-livered dunderhead, we spend hours every day picking up trash that soldiers like you scatter about. It takes one soldier one minute to pick up a cigarette butt and throw it in a butt can. With

eight million men in the Army, that's eight million minutes that are wasted. That's 103,333 hours every day that are spent all over the Army just picking up cigarette butts."

The private was either unimpressed or too scared to speak. Anyway, he continued to stand silently.

The sergeant's voice acquired an oily purple tone. "Now, I'll tell you what you are going to do. You are going to get a shovel. And you are going to dig a hole . . . a hole six feet deep. And you are going to take this little cigarette butt and give it a decent burial right at the bottom of that hole." Then his voice rose to a blistering shout. "And you are going to do it right now! Git that shovel and start digging!"

The private gulped down any comment he may have felt the desire to make, turned, and walked slowly to the supply room for the shovel. I leaned against a building and waited. Something was sure to come out of this and I wanted to be there when it all started.

In a moment the private returned with the shovel and began to dig the hole slowly and desperately. For about fifteen minutes he dug, and got down about three feet. By that time he had gotten through the dust and was down to solid ground. He stopped to rest. As he leaned on the shovel, two other privates approached him, and the three of them began to talk. They were talking in such subdued voices that I couldn't hear what they were saying but I could tell that it was very interesting. They became more excited the longer they talked. In a moment the two newcomers left and our poor gravedigger started back to work with amazing enthusiasm. In almost nothing flat he had the remaining three feet of that hole dug and was standing back to admire his work. "Well done," I heard him say aloud. Then he hurried off to get the sergeant to approve his work before he buried the cigarette. The hole was about two feet wide at the top and tapered gently so that it was about one foot wide at the bottom. It was fully six feet deep.

In a moment the private returned, following meekly behind

the still infuriated sergeant, who stalked up to the hole, hands on hip, and scowl on face. He stood leering down into the hole. Then suddenly things began to happen. From behind the corner of a nearby building the two other privates emerged silently but rapidly. They rushed up behind the unsuspecting sergeant, and before he knew what was happening, one seized him around the waist, pinning his arms down, while the other grabbed him around his legs, holding them together and lifting at the same time. Before the sergeant even had time to cry out, his feet were over his head and he was sliding head first into the newly dug grave. Such kicking, screaming, and muffled cursing this old world had never witnessed! All the while our maltreated private stood silently by, watching the burial of the sergeant with smug satisfaction. The two culprits who had thrown the sergeant into the hole quickly vanished. The private stayed on, too overjoyed to move.

I thought it was about time for some one to come to the aid of the sergeant. After all, he couldn't stay upside down in that hole forever.

"What's going on here?" I asked the private when I walked up.

"O, hello, Chaplain," cheerfully replied the private. "The sergeant is after an earthworm."

"An earthworm?" I echoed.

"Yes, sir. You see, the sergeant is a very determined man. He saw this worm crawling along and about to go into a hole. He bet me a quarter that he could catch the worm before it went into the hole. I took him up on it. The worm saw the sergeant coming, and since even worms don't like sergeants, the worm made a dive for the hole. The sergeant made a dive for the worm and missed. He saw his quarter getting away, so he started to dig. He kept on digging when he should have stopped, and this is what happened."

It was a good yarn, so I didn't let on I knew the truth.

The sergeant was still yelling and kicking but he was getting tired. "Come on," I said, "we have got to get him out. He might die if he stayed like that too long."

"Then why bother to get him out?" The private asked innocently.

But we grabbed the sergeant's legs and started pulling. When we got him out he was covered with dust and dirt. His face was very red and he was blowing hard. He was too exhausted to stand, so he remained sitting on the ground.

The private spoke first, "Your face is red, Sergeant."

The sergeant drew his hand across his grimy face and wheezed an answer, "I know you didn't do it, soldier. But I'm going to bury you in that hole for standing there and letting it happen!"

Then I spoke up. "Now, Sergeant, you want to be careful how you speak to the soldier. After all, if it hadn't been for his help you would still be down in that hole. And if it hadn't been for you the hole wouldn't have been there."

The sergeant got slowly to his feet. He looked at me and then at the private. Finally he said, "O.K., Chaplain. I guess I was a little hard on him. Thanks for helping me out. But after this" (and he said this pleadingly) "please, please, don't throw your butt on the ground . . . or mine in the ground."

It isn't often that you get a chance to see a private come out the victor in a clash between a private and a sergeant. Although I was sorry for the sergeant, I couldn't hold back a little feeling of gladness that things had turned out the way they had.

Continuing my tour of the camp, I walked down to the drill field to see if anything interesting was happening there. We had a battalion of colored troops on our base, and when I approached the drill field I noticed that a group of these colored soldiers were on the field, being put through the drills by their drill sergeant. The drill sergeant was a tall dark Negro. I don't think I ever heard a man with a more resonant bass voice. He

could be heard easily from one end of the drill field to the other, although he was not shouting, just talking to his men. I have seen many drill sessions, but as I look back on it now, I think this was the best drill I ever witnessed.

The sergeant had twelve men, all of them fine soldiers. They must have been drilling for the sport of it. I knew that all of them were far too good to need any extra drilling. They were as prompt and precise in the execution of the commands as any general could hope for his troops to be. And why they were that good was a complete mystery to me. The orders the sergeant was giving them could not have been found in any drill manual. If the same orders had been given to any other group of soldiers, I knew they would have made a terrible mess of things. They wouldn't have known what the orders meant. When I stopped to watch the men drilling, the sergeant turned and saluted me. Then he turned back to his men and gave them an order that went like this:

Stand up now and look right sharp,
The Chaplain's on our right.
The drill we're gonna do now
Must surely be a sight.

This order was given in cadence. Translated it meant that the men were to come to attention, which they did promptly. The sergeant went on:

Turn to your left and don't look 'round;
Left foot up, then on the ground.

That, to my way of thinking, was a unique way to say, "Column left. Forward march."

On the right there is a gal;
If you look there you'll be her pal.

That meant "Eyes, right."

Up in front is her pappy;
If you'll look there you'll make him happy.

All eyes snapped back to an "Eyes, front."

Up in front there is some sin;
Better turn back or we'll fall right in.

That may not be the orthodox way to get away from sin, and it may not be the approved order for the movement "To the rear, march," but it got the same results.

On our left there is a man
Who has come to preach as best he can.
If we turn left we'll show this fellow
That our friendship is so mellow.

The group of soldiers was just in front of me at the time. This order meant that they were to do a left-flank movement and come up in front of me. When they had come within about ten feet, the sergeant said:

Better stop and don't get closer.
Don't forget, he's an officer.

That was his worst rhyme, but it made out pretty well. It brought the men to a halt, and that is what it was meant to do.

The sergeant saluted me and asked, "Chaplain, how did you like our drill?"

"Fine," I answered. "But tell me, how do you think up those rhyming orders?"

He laughed. "Oh, they ain't much. I got a knack for it when I was calling square dances down in Memphis. It's all about the same—dancing and drilling. Only difference is I would rather dance."

"Do you give all your orders in rhyme?" I asked him.

"No, sir. That was sorta special for you. Mostly I give them in short orders. Would you like to hear some?"

I answered that I most certainly would. So the men fell in and the sergeant gave them the first of the "short orders."

"Deer strut now," he commanded, and the soldiers marched off in perfect cadence. "Turkey gander on the right" meant "Eyes, right." After the men had marched down the field a short distance, I heard the sergeant sing out, "Going home." The men did a "To the rear, march." The sergeant gave the command "Route step" on the way back, but the way he did it was to say, "'Possum walk and grumble." That meant that the men could break step and walk to suit their own convenience, more or less, and were permitted to talk.

After getting the men back to me and calling them to a halt and to attention, the sergeant gave them the order "Colored boy's special," which meant they could fall out.

I stepped up then and commended the men for their fine exhibition of drilling. They were pleased that I had enjoyed their drill and asked me to come back and watch them again. I promised to do this, and did many times.

When I started back to my office in the chapel, it was nearing time for retreat. Many of the soldiers had already been released from their duties and were dressed in preparation for their night passes which would take them into town to see their girl friends, shows, and other forms of entertainment. Nearly all of them were dressed very nicely and would have passed a stiff inspection easily. As I walked along the company street I met one soldier, a colored soldier, who was dressed with meticulous care. He outranked all others in the perfection of his dress. In fact, he had dressed with such care that he had attained the look of being overdressed. As I look at him I thought vaguely that he looked like a colored preacher on his way to a funeral. And that is what he turned out to be. It so happened that a good many colored preachers were drafted into

the Army. These men were usually more or less free-lance, or self-appointed, preachers. They had no church of their own, as a rule, but preached wherever and whenever they could get a congregation to listen to them. This particular soldier had been one of these free-lance preachers in civilian life. Now that he was in the Army, he tried to keep up his profession during his spare time. Of course, his being in uniform gave him added power and prestige when he was among his brethren. When I met him on the company street, this soldier was on his way to one of the downtown Negro churches for an appointment. I stopped him and engaged him in conversation. I learned that he was on his way to a funeral.

"Yes, sir, Chaplain," confided the soldier, "I'se in a powerful big hurry to git to town."

"What is all the rush?" I asked.

He put on a very serious air, pursing his lips, letting a deep frown wrinkle his brow, and clasping his coat lapels in both hands. Great humility fairly dripped from him.

"Well, you see, sir," he said very slowly and gravely, "one of our good brothers passed away in town the other night. The pastor of his church asked me to come in and hold the funeral service. So I is on my way now to funeralize the corpse."

• 4 •

A Chaplain's Day

DURING the course of an ordinary day a chaplain is called upon to render assistance in the solution of many varied and unusual problems. The book says that the chaplain is responsible for the religious and moral welfare of all personnel. When you get to thinking about it, that can mean just about anything you want it to mean. For instance, if a soldier doesn't get the promotion he has worked so hard for and feels that he is entitled to, he may become discouraged. This discouragement may lead him to adopt a devil-may-care attitude. This attitude may lead him to get drunk—and right then morals enter the picture and the chaplain becomes involved. But to solve the problem, the chaplain must follow the line of cause and effect until he gets to the point that indicates that the soldier got drunk because he didn't get a promotion that he deserved. Then the chaplain must work on that problem. And

while working on that he may uncover a host of other problems that at first glance don't seem to have much to do with the job of a chaplain. After a few months or years of experience with this sort of thing, any chaplain who is on his toes to protect his men and to guard their religious and moral welfare will be going around snooping into this and that, trying to locate situations or circumstances that may lead to trouble. If he finds them, he tries to squelch them right then and there, before they have a chance to cause any real trouble. But anyone (and there are a lot of officers in the Army who fall into this class) who doesn't understand the chaplain's job will probably come to the conclusion that the chaplain is just an old busybody who is trying to make life as miserable and unhappy as possible for all those who have authority. Leaves, furloughs, allotments, promotions, clashes with the top kick, K.P. duty, special details, supposed abuses by the commanding officer or the Medical Department, failure to get a P.X. ration card, loans, Red Cross assistance—all such problems, along with almost anything else you can think of that would disturb a soldier's peace of mind, find their way into the chaplain's office sooner or later. He is the only officer in the Army whose sole duty is to hear gripes and troubles and to try to do something to help both the abused and the abuser.

I had not been at Pinedale long before I was getting my share of the problem children we had around camp. Some of the more chronic cases were tagged "goldbricks."

Now, a goldbrick is not an uncommon type in the Army. He is just a soldier who, in one manner or another, tries to avoid his duty. But, please, let us reject the false notion that all goldbricks are found in the Army. As a matter of fact, there are more in civilian life right now than there ever were in the Army. The soldiers who were goldbricks in the Army probably were goldbricks before they were drafted. In the Army they showed up more distinctly. In civilian life, as a rule, there

is no one standing over you to see that you do your job. If you don't put in a good day's work, no one comes around calling you a goldbrick. You just get fired and start looking for another job. But you don't get fired in the Army. And you will draw the same pay check whether you goldbrick or work your heart out. It works out then that the Army actually encourages men to goldbrick.

I ran across one of these goldbricks one day in this fashion. I was walking down the company street, when I came across a detachment of soldiers standing an inspection. I stopped, as usual, to see what was going on. The captain who was making the inspection went up and down the line of soldiers, making a careful check of their clothing, appearance, and posture. Near the end of one of the lines stood (I should say, slouched) a very tall soldier. That is, he would have been tall if he had unfolded his full length. When the captain came to this soldier, he gave him a rather disgusted look and said, "Straighten up, Thompson. Don't hunch your shoulders over so much. Stand up like a man. You look like an anteater, all bent over like that."

I didn't pay much attention to this rebuke at the time, but I thought I saw a gleam come into Thompson's eye. The whole incident probably would have slipped my mind if it hadn't been for the fact that the very next day I was walking down this same company street with the master sergeant of that company. We came around the corner of a barracks building, and there was this Thompson. He was down on his hands and knees, his head lowered almost to the ground, crawling along near the wall of the barracks building. I looked at the sergeant and he looked at me, both of us wondering what was going on. We watched Thompson for a few minutes, but he continued to crawl around as if he were looking for something he had lost. Finally the sergeant could stand it no longer.

"Thompson, what in the name of—are you looking for?" demanded the sergeant.

Thompson stopped and looked up at the sergeant, bewildered written all over his face. He looked as if he couldn't believe what he had just heard.

"Haven't you heard?" he asked the sergeant in an awed, incredulous tone.

"Heard what?" roared the sergeant.

"I'm an anteater. I'm looking for ants."

He said it simply and gently, like a father telling his son the facts of life. Indeed, he said it so sincerely that the sergeant just grunted "Oh," as if he were a fool for not knowing. But that state of affairs didn't last long. He grabbed Thompson by the collar and hustled him off to the orderly room.

A few days later I read an order that Private Thompson had been discharged from the Army because of inadaptability of military life.

Not all the goldbricks got off that easy, however. Some of them really worked hard and professionally over long periods of time, sometimes for months, to get out of the Army. I remarked to one of them that it seemed to me he spent more time and effort trying to get out of the Army than he would if he buckled down and tried to be a good soldier. He replied that doing what he did provided him with a safe job, but to be a good soldier and run the risk of being sent overseas was dangerous. One might even get hurt in battle.

One soldier who really worked hard at the job of goldbricking was a fellow named Angelli. Angelli had been in the Army eighteen months before he came to Pinedale, and up to that time had been a good soldier. But because Pinedale was a base from which men were sent overseas, he started developing strange aches and pains soon after he came to our camp. After a while his pains became localized in his feet. That, I suppose, was because his feet were the largest parts of his body. To hear Angelli tell it, he had bad feet, very bad feet. To hear the medics tell it, there was nothing wrong with his feet. They examined them, X-rayed them, soaked them in

solutions, gave them heat treatments, and did about everything else that could be done to improve his feet. But it did no good. Angelli came on sick call every day. The more the medics did for him, the worse he got. He was slowly driving the Medical Department insane. That was how things stood when they sent Angelli to me. I loved those medics. They never sent a soldier to me unless he had already driven them mad. They were too considerate to bother the chaplain with minor cases, such as moral cases.

Anyway, Angelli came up to my office. He was in a bad way. I happened to be looking out the window and saw him coming. He could hardly make it. He shuffled along extremely slowly, barely able to put one foot in front of the other. It took him almost five minutes to cross the street. Finally he got into my office. He fell into a chair. After a few casual remarks he got down to relating his troubles. He didn't need any encouragement from me to help him tell his story. He poured it all out, going back to say that his foot trouble was inherited. His great-grandfather had walked all the way from Ohio to California in 1860. That had ruined his great-grandfather's feet. And all his children and grandchildren had had those same bad feet. He said that he had seen the medics. They wouldn't do a thing for him—just gave him pills and sent him back to duty. (By the way, that is what all goldbricks say.) I listened patiently and politely to his story and then assured him that I would do all I could to help him.

After Angelli had struggled painfully from my office, I watched him limp away. I continued watching him for a week. Not once did I see him change his pace or in any way give the slightest indication that his foot trouble was not real. I questioned the medics and his company officers and learned that for four months Angelli had been acting this same way. There wasn't a thing wrong with him as far as the medics could determine, yet for four long months he had

been behaving like this. I had a long talk with the psychiatrist on our base and we agreed that the soldier could not be reclaimed. He was certainly no good to the Army and the best thing for all concerned was to discharge him. The machinery then got under way to have Angelli released from the service as a neuropsychiatric case. A few weeks later the papers were all completed and the time had come for Angelli to depart from our field as a civilian.

Considerate friends helped Angelli pack his belongings into a duffel bag and then carried the bag, which was rather heavy, over to the orderly room. There Angelli was to come to receive his discharge. After a while he came in, still limping and shuffling along. He finally got before the commanding officer, who had his papers. His face was drawn with pain and suffering. The officer made a few remarks about how he hated to see him go and then wished him luck as a civilian. Angelli thanked him. Then the officer gave him his papers, declaring that he was now a civilian. Angelli took the discharge papers, looked at them for a moment, and then asked the officer, "Does this mean that I am now out of the Army?"

"Yes," replied the officer.

"And it means that the Army can no longer tell me where to go, what to do, and so on?"

"That is right," agreed the officer.

Angelli looked at the papers again. Then he lifted them up and reverently kissed them. He tucked them carefully in his coat pocket. Then he reached down, picked up the heavy duffel bag, threw it over his shoulder, turned on his heel, and walked rapidly and easily from the room. All of us stood there dumbfounded. The last we saw of Angelli, he was walking down the street to the bus, a big grin on his face and a light spring in his step. None of us spoke for a moment. Finally the commanding officer said, "Well, he worked hard enough for it. I guess he had it coming."

One of the more important duties of the chaplain is to make frequent calls at the hospital. Many times he is called in by the medical officers of the hospital to be with a dying soldier during his last hours. Such occasions are not pleasant, but they are necessary and no good chaplain will allow anything to prevent his being with his men at these crucial times. However, there are many times when the chaplain goes to the hospital on less serious matters. He goes sometimes just for the sake of being with the men and doing what he can to cheer them up and make their hours of confinement less boring. It turns out many times that the chaplain is cheered by the men more than he cheers them. I know this was my experience more than a few times. You must remember, of course, that not every man in an Army hospital is critically ill. At Camp Pinedale, for instance, we had only a small hospital unit and did not keep the more serious cases. Some patients had colds which they could not cure while they were on duty. Some had minor skin infections. And some were in the hospital for purposes of observation only. In any case, all of them were able to be up and around the hospital, and the chaplain did not go to see them with the idea that he was going to see men who were dangerously ill. I always went to the hospital with the idea of having as much fun with the men as possible. And it usually turned out that we had a wonderful time together during these visits.

One morning the work in the office was light, so I decided to amble down to the hospital to see if there was anything going on there. I walked in, and after exchanging a few quips with the men in general, I sat down by the bed of a soldier named Ben Morgan to have a talk with him.* I recognized him immediately, for the day before there had been consid-

*This incident took place while I was stationed at Charleston, South Carolina. I have, for convenience, included it with this group of hospital experiences.

erable excitement in camp about him. He and a buddy had been to the beach, swimming in the ocean. The report had come back that Ben had been drowned. But, as in the case of Mark Twain, the report had been greatly exaggerated.

"Hello, Ben," I greeted him as I sat down in a chair near his bed. "Got all the water out of your ears?"

He chuckled, "What little there was in there is out by now, I suppose. You know, Chaplain, it gives me a funny feeling to lie up here and think that yesterday all my buddies thought I was dead."

"Well, you are acting like an eavesdropper," I reminded him. "You get everybody thinking you are dead, and let them start saying all kind of nice things about you. Then up you pop, live as can be, and hear everything that has been said about you."

"It isn't quite fair," Ben admitted with mock seriousness. "Maybe I should have stayed dead—if I ever had been."

"Just what did happen, Ben?" I asked. "I have heard several different accounts of what took place. Maybe you can give me the correct version of your own death."

Ben took a deep breath and started this yarn: "Jack—that's my buddy—and I decided to go over to the beach yesterday morning. When we got there and got dressed for swimming, there were only three or four people on the beach. Jack and I swam out about a hundred and fifty yards to a place where the water gets shallow. Out there the water is usually only four or five feet deep. Well, we swam around for a while. Then Jack decided to go back to the bathhouse for some cigarettes. I told him to go ahead; I would swim around for a while and then come in and meet him on the beach. By this time the other people on the beach had gone.

"Jack came on in, and in about ten minutes I did too. After I got to the beach I walked back a little way to a sand dune and climbed on top of it. On the other side of

the sand dunes there is a road that runs parallel to the beach. I had just reached the top of the sand dune when I saw a girl having trouble with her car on the road. It looked like she couldn't get it started. She looked right pretty, so of course I felt I had to go over and help her. I tinkered with the motor a little and got it started. But the girl hadn't driven more than a hundred yards when the motor quit again. I walked on down to where the girl was stalled and worked on the car motor again. All this must have taken an hour or more. When I finally got the car going for sure, I went back to the bathhouse to find Jack. But he was gone.

"You see, Jack came back to the beach just after I had gone to help the girl with her car. He looked around the beach but didn't see me. So he thought that I must still be out in the water, hiding from him. He swam out to where we had been, looking for me. Now it just happened that the tide had changed and a pretty strong undertow was developing. Jack looked all around, but he couldn't find me, naturally. Then he got scared and decided that the undertow had carried me away and I had been drowned. He hurried back to the bathhouse, dressed, and rushed to the nearest telephone to report my disappearance. Being scared and excited like he was, he reported me as being drowned. He had reported all this to headquarters, so the Old Man sent out a general alarm. He called the Navy base and asked them to send out a boat to the place where we had been swimming, to search for my body. And he told Jack to come on back to the camp.

"By the time I had finished with that girl's car, all this had taken place. My drowning had been properly reported and searchers had been sent to locate my body. Isn't that gruesome?

"When I went to the bathhouse to look for Jack, he was gone. I couldn't understand why he should have pulled out like that. But I decided to take one more dip in the ocean to wash off the sand, and then to come on back to camp myself.

"I was just going into the water when I saw the Navy search boat coming along. I stopped to watch them and was surprised to see them stop, then start circling around right where we had been swimming. The men on the boat were all looking over the sides like they had lost something. My curiosity got the better of me, so I swam out to see what it was all about. When I got to the boat I asked the sailors what they were looking for. You can imagine my surprise when they said they were looking for a man who had drowned. Naturally, I wanted to help, so I climbed aboard the boat and all of us started looking for the poor guy who had drowned.

"We looked and looked, but couldn't find any trace of the fellow. Finally, as we continued the search, I casually asked if anyone knew the guy who had drowned. One of the sailors said, 'Yeah it was a soldier from Camp Pinedale . . . a fellow named Morgan, Ben Morgan.'

"I almost fell out of the boat.

"'Ben Morgan?' I screamed. 'Why, he isn't drowned!'

"'How do you know so much about it?' asks this sailor.

"'Why, I know because I'm Ben Morgan.' I stammered, still confused.

"I finally convinced the sailors that I really was Ben Morgan, and that I wasn't dead, in spite of what their orders said. But they were pretty hard to convince. I think some of them were sore at me because I wasn't drowned and they had done all that work for nothing."

Ben paused then, as if he were through with his story. But I had another question for him. "What puts you in the hospital now, since you aren't really drowned?"

Ben grunted cynically. "You know how some of these commanding officers are. See, the Old Man asked the Navy to help the Army find a drowned man, and the report got out that I really was dead. But if the truth became known, the C.O. thinks he would look pretty silly. So the official report is that I *almost*

drowned. And it will be that or else . . . I'm in the hospital recovering from the terrible effects of an official drowning."

Not all the men I visited in the hospital were as cheerful about their sickness as Ben Morgan. As I said before, some of the men were in there for observation only. I visited one such man once, and when I asked him how he was feeling, he replied bitterly, "I'm not feeling good at all."

I asked him gently, "What seems to be your trouble?"

"Well, I'm lying here practically dying and these medics won't do anything for me. I've been trying to tell them for three days now that I am sick, but they won't do a thing for me but shove pills at me and tell me I'm not sick."

"Maybe you aren't," I ventured.

"Oh—yes—I—am—too," he declared with feeling. "I tell you I am near death. If you had a headache as bad as mine, you would think that you were dying too. But not these medics. 'It's all in your head,' they say. I know that. I've got a headache. Sure it's in my head. Where else would it be?"

I tried to explain, "Maybe they mean that you just imagine you have these aches and pains—that they don't really exist."

But the soldier wouldn't be calmed. "I know that's what they mean. But when I've got a headache, I don't need no doctor to tell me I just think I have. My head hurts. My back hurts. I hurt all over. But they don't do anything for me here . . . just give me pills and tell me there is nothing wrong with me."

I answered him gently. "You seem to be rather determined to have something wrong."

"I know there's something wrong. What is more, I know what it is. I've been coming on sick call for a long time now, but I never could get much help from the medics. I decided to go to a civilian doctor and find out what was wrong for myself. And I found out plenty."

"Did you give this information to the Medical Department here?"

"Sure I did. But that don't mean nothing to them. I even brought them the X rays this civilian doctor made."

I must admit that the case was beginning to sound more interesting and I wanted to know what had happened.

"Who was this civilian doctor?" I inquired.

The soldier answered proudly. "He is Dr. Taylor,* the best man in town. When you go to him with some ailment, he guarantees to find out what it is."

I happened to know about Dr. Taylor myself. He was one of the best-known quacks in town. He put on a big advertising campaign to draw the suffering into his office. His big drawing card went something like this: *X ray, fluoroscope, cardiograph, and complete metabolism for \$1.50. The cause of your sickness found or your money back.*

Needless to say, he always found the cause of the sickness. This soldier had been his victim.

The soldier continued, "Dr. Taylor took X rays, then pointed out on these X ray plates just what my trouble is. Here, I'll show you. I brought these along with me so I could prove to the medics just how sick I am."

He reached under his bed and pulled out a large envelope, from which he took several X ray plates of his back and neck.

"See, right here," the soldier said, pointing to a picture of his back, showing a normal curvature of the spine. "See here, where my spine curves in? Well, right there a vertebra is missing."

I looked at the soldier to see if he were joking. He wasn't. He was in dead earnest. I decided to play along with him.

"A vertebra gone, huh? Say, that is bad. Did Dr. Taylor say where it had gone?"

"No."

I shook my head in wonderment. "That is surely a new one for medical science. A whole vertebra from the back just picks itself up and walks off. I wonder where it could be. Perhaps it

*This is not the doctor's actual name, of course.

is just wandering around over your body, looking for a likely place to settle. Did Dr. Taylor say he could locate it for you and get it back in place?"

The soldier shook his head. "No, he didn't say just that. But he did say that he could fix my back so I wouldn't have these pains, with just a few treatments."

"At how much a treatment?"

"Five dollars."

"And how many treatments?"

"Ten."

"Well, it seems to me," I mused, "that fifty dollars is a lot of money to pay for one wandering vertebra. After all, once it was located and put back in place, it might decide to get up and walk off again. Would the doctor make any kind of promise that he could make the vertebra stay put?"

The soldier would not be discouraged in his faith in Dr. Taylor. He answered, "No, but it would be worth it for the relief I would get. You see, that is what is causing all my trouble. My spinal cord has come out where that vertebra is missing, and the other vertebrae are pressing down on it. That is what causes my head to hurt. And my back, too."

I shook my head in sympathy. "I'm sure it must be painful. What did the medics say when you showed them these pictures and told them what Dr. Taylor said?"

The soldier laughed sourly at the question. "These guys here? They just laughed and said that I had better come to the hospital for observation."

And my respect for the medics rose another step.

Just before Christmas our guardhouse was moved to a new building. The prisoners had been staying in an old building that wasn't any too comfortable. The new quarters were very nice. They had new beds, a few chairs, and even two writing tables. The roof had been ceiled in, thus creating a sort of attic

between the ceiling and the roof of the building. Down in one corner of the room the carpenters had cut a hole in the ceiling so that a person could climb into the attic. And thereby hangs a tale.

Whenever the prisoners were brought back to the barracks after their day's work around camp, they were always searched by a guard before they were readmitted to their quarters. Sometimes the men picked up things around the camp that they were not allowed to have in the guardhouse. The guards had to take these things away from them before they came in for the night.

A few of the prisoners managed to slip a large twenty-gallon crock into the guardhouse one evening. How they got past the guards with that will always be a mystery; nevertheless they did it. They took this crock into the attic above their quarters. Then they began the slow process of slipping in raisins, sugar, prunes, and vanilla extract from the mess hall, and I think even a few bottles of shaving lotion and hair tonic. All these ingredients they put into the crock, and then added water. Then they sat back and waited for the mixture to ferment. And what a brew it turned out to be. . . . I don't know how long they let it sit before they thought it was ripe, but on New Year's Eve they broke it out for serving.

Just a few minutes after midnight on January first, the guards in the guardhouse were brought suddenly to their feet by unusual and loud noises coming from the prisoners' quarters. They rushed out—to behold the prisoners shouting, cursing, throwing chairs through the windows, breaking light bulbs, tearing the stove apart and throwing out the pieces, heaving beds around, knocking each other on the head, leaping, yelling, dancing, and in general having quite a celebration. The prison officer sent in a rush call to the provost marshal for reinforcements, and then sent a call to the camp commander. It seemed as if a riot had started in the guardhouse. The situation was bad.

The guards went into the enclosure around the prisoners' quarters and surrounded the building. A few of the prisoners themselves had been thrown through the windows and doors during the scrap, and were wandering around in the dark in a very dazed state. These the guards quickly took in hand and got out of the theater of operations. The provost marshal arrived with a twelve-gauge shotgun, not to shoot the prisoners but to give his words added meaning. He went to the door of the prisoners' quarters, and at the top of his voice, called out an order for the prisoners to fall out and line up along the fence. His voice carried about as far as a whisper in a storm. The prisoners were making so much noise in their celebration that it was impossible to hear him. Then the provost marshal fired his gun into the air twice, thinking that the loud noise would momentarily quiet the men and they could hear his command to fall out. But he might as well have been shooting a peashooter, for all the effect it had on those prisoners.

All other measures failing, the provost marshal ordered his guards to arm themselves with night sticks and to go into the barracks and bring the prisoners out, using whatever force was necessary. Fifteen guards went in with the purpose of bringing out about thirty prisoners. Much happened in the next few moments. Many heads were cracked by night sticks. One man broke his arm when he hit a guard with much force. He did little damage to the guard, who promptly cracked the prisoner's head with his night stick. Some of the guards had their night sticks taken away from them and were knocked on the head by the prisoners. But after about fifteen minutes the guards got the upper hand and brought the situation under control. The prisoners were marched out and lined up along the fence.

Soon all was quiet. The celebrating prisoners were subdued. Those with injuries were sent off to the hospital under guard. Those who were still in good health received twenty minutes of stiff double drill. Then they were given a cold shower and

sent back to their barracks. By this time they were completely whipped. There was no talking from them, no beefing. They were sober now, and they were thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Humbly they went to bed. A guard was kept around their quarters for the rest of the night, but there was no more violence.

The next morning the investigation got under way. It was only then that they found the crock, still about half full of its stinking contents. None of the investigating authorities would volunteer to taste the brew to see what its strength was, so they had to send it to a laboratory to have it tested. When the report came back everyone was surprised that those who had drunk the stuff were still alive. Needless to say, it was a very potent brew. Small wonder it caused such rioting.

One of the men in the guardhouse was a man named Ponchelli. It so happened that I witnessed the event that had led to his imprisonment. Ponchelli was a very rough-and-ready soldier. He was jailed on a charge of misuse and abuse of government property. And the government had a good case. I don't think I ever met a man who had a readier supply of curse words than he. However, I must add, out of respect for Ponchelli (and he did deserve some respect), that his cursing was so natural, so much a part of his speech and so completely unaffected, that one hardly noticed that he was cursing. I often thought that he must have been born cursing and then took a postgraduate course.

It happened one day, as I was returning in a staff car from one of my weekly trips to the mountains, that I saw a jeep coming up the mountain toward me. The driver of the jeep was taking the curves a little too fast. I was afraid he would take a curve so fast that he would run off the road and tumble down the side of the mountain. And that did happen, except that he didn't tumble very far. It was just plain luck that at the place where the jeep went off the road, the mountain was

not steep, nor was it far to a level spot. The jeep rolled over and over, finally coming to a stop about twenty-five feet below the level of the road. It landed right side up. I stopped my car and leaped out, fully expecting to find the driver of the jeep smashed beyond recognition. But he wasn't. As a matter of fact, he already had gotten out of the well-smashed-up jeep and was climbing back toward the road when I ran up to him. I recognized him as Ponchelli.

"Thank God you are safe, Ponchelli!" I exclaimed "The Lord was certainly with you that time."

Unflustered by his narrow escape from death, Ponchelli answered dryly, "Well, if He was, Chaplain, He sure had one hell of a ride!"

Getting Orders

THERE come times during a chaplain's stay at a post when he must go to headquarters and have a conference with the supervising chaplain of the area. Such consultations give the supervising chaplain an opportunity to see how his chaplains are coming along and to offer suggestions and help to them in the conduct of their work. After I had been at Pinedale for more than a year, the time came for me to make one of these pilgrimages to San Francisco to have a chat with the chief. Off I went one bright morning, fully expecting to have a miserable trip. And I would have, too, had it not been for the refreshing antics of some of the members of our armed forces.

When I got on the train that was to take me to San Francisco, I found myself sitting in a coach that was occupied chiefly by servicemen. I had not been in that car long before I became aware of a feeling of animosity that existed between

the soldiers and the conductor. I had no idea of how this unfriendly feeling came into existence. But I was sure it was there. And it was greatly increased after our first stop. Frankly, I couldn't blame the conductor too much if he felt no particular love for those soldiers.

Every time the conductor came through our car, the soldiers taunted him with catcalls, ribs, slandering remarks, and general insults. The conductor glared at the soldiers, made threatening remarks about putting them off the train, and then went on his way. He made a mistake, I think, when he said something about putting the soldiers off the train. That planted evil seeds in the minds of some of the bolder characters. I doubt if they would have thought of their next plan of action if the conductor had not made that remark. The conductor probably will regret to his dying day that the thought of issuing that warning ever entered his mind. O cursed thought that could lead to such humiliation! This is what happened.

We had not gone many miles before the train pulled into a station and stopped. It was one of those small, out-of-the-way stations that have such an attraction for trains. As conductors so often do, this conductor opened one of the doors at the end of the coach, raised the coach platform, and stepped down onto the station platform. Three of the soldiers had followed the conductor to the coach platform, but they meekly and timidly kept their distance. In fact, they didn't even step from the train, but merely stood on the lower step of the coach platform, just waiting. The conductor walked for a short distance along the platform, toward the front of the train. He was the only train attendant who had dismounted at this station, so the door he had opened was the only one on the whole train that was open just at that time.

When his business at the station was completed and it was time to depart, the conductor gave his signal to the engineer to start the train. He was still standing on the station plat-

form, waiting so he could catch on at his door when the train moved by him.

Two soldiers had been standing on the lower step of the coach platform, watching the conductor. When they saw him give the signal for the engineer to start the train, and then felt the train slowly get under way, they galvanized into action. They hurriedly retreated to the upper platform of the car. They banged down the platform cover and slammed shut the door, and thus closed the only opening in the train through which the conductor could re-enter. When the car rolled by, you really should have seen the look of utter bewilderment, then of purple anger and rage, that came to that conductor's face. He was put off his own train . . . cast aside and left behind. He waved frantically to the engineer, but that noble person was busy looking in the other direction. Shouting was of no avail, since the train was making so much noise. Slowly at first, then more and more rapidly, the train pulled out of the station, leaving the conductor racing about madly on the station platform. I saw him out the window as we passed by, and I remember that I hoped vaguely that he would now know how a civilian felt when he missed his train.

I think we would have pulled out of the station and left the conductor for sure, had it not been for the fact that the brakeman was standing on the rear observation platform of the train. He saw the conductor as we left the station, and pulled the overhead emergency-stop cord, which brought the train to a grinding halt. The conductor scrambled onto the train and we got under way again, this time with a full crew aboard. I don't know what happened later, but as long as I was on that train that particular conductor did not come through our car again.

I would hate myself to my dying day if I were to take up your time and mine by telling you about all the things that went on while I was having my conference with the staff chap-

lain. I was with him for the better part of the day. When I got through and started back to my base, I tried to remember some of the things that had been said and some part of the undoubtedly important discussion that had taken place. But for some strange reason, probably because of my rather slow mind and thick skull, I couldn't remember much of what had transpired. As I sat on the train on my return trip, I tried to boil down the day's discussion to a few salient facts. This I did purely by dint of determination. This is what it all came to:

The chief asked me, "How would you like to go overseas?"

"Fine!" I exclaimed. "That is why I came into the Army. Have you got any good chances for my getting over?"

"Well," the chief drawled, assuming a confidential manner, "we are going to need twenty chaplains over in the South Pacific before the first of May. The staff chaplain over there wants to relieve some of the men he has on duty now. They have been over since the beginning of the war, so he wants to give them a chance to come back to the States for a while. He says he wants no one over there but the younger men. Now, he will probably draw all those chaplains from our command."

Since I was about the youngest chaplain in the Fourth Air Force, I thought I would have a pretty good chance of getting over. And I was certainly ready to go. I started working up a pretty good elation over the possibilities of my getting an overseas assignment. The chief noticed that I was getting excited over this good news, so he hastened to add, "Now, that is not official. It is just a rumor so far. You must keep it strictly in the family. It came to me pretty straight, but I can't be too sure about it. Maybe there is something to it and maybe not—I don't know. At any rate, it is still just a rumor."

And that is the way it was with everything else we discussed. Everything was "just a rumor." The chief didn't know for certain. He had heard this and that, but he couldn't be sure. I couldn't tell these things outside since they had to be

kept in the family. There might be something to them, and again, there might not be—the chief didn't know. At the end of the day I had heard a good many things, but I could be sure of two things: One, rumors were flying thick and fast at headquarters; two, the chief didn't know anything for certain. And I might say, without the slightest intention of being disrespectful, that I knew both these facts before I went up for the conference with the chief. That was one thing you soon learned in the Army: Nobody knew anything, but everybody had an abundant supply of latrine rumors.

I returned to Pinedale and resumed my duties there, more or less giving up the idea that I would be requisitioned for overseas duty at any time in the near future. May came and passed without my being called for those South Pacific assignments, thus confirming my belief that the chief's information, though well intended, was really nothing more than a rumor. I resigned myself to the obvious: I would spend the entire war at Camp Pinedale. You can imagine my surprise, then, when early in June I answered the telephone in my office and heard the camp adjutant request me to come to his office right away. I hurried up, wondering what I had done wrong now. But the adjutant had good news for me. He said that orders had just come in for me to report to Greensboro, North Carolina, immediately. Greensboro happened to be the site of the Army Air Forces Overseas Replacement Depot. When I learned that my orders were sending me there, I knew that my time had finally come. I was going overseas!

The orders said that I must report without delay to Greensboro, but there remained a number of things that I had to do before I could leave Camp Pinedale. For one thing, I had to arrange for my family to be sent back home to Florida. You see, in October of the year before, our first baby had been born. Then, in January, my wife and baby had come out to California to be with me, since it looked as if I were going

to spend the rest of my natural life there, and we wanted it to be as natural as possible. Now all our things had to be packed, reservations had to be made on the train back to Florida, and I had to rush out and buy all the odds and ends that a little baby girl needs when she is traveling. On top of this, all my records in the chapel had to be checked, my equipment turned in, and my work there finished up. Even by putting forth my best efforts I knew that I wouldn't be able to get away from Pinedale in less than four days. It took considerable persuasion to convince the commanding officer that I needed that much time. Every time I mentioned the subject to him he pulled out my orders and said, "Your orders direct you to report without delay." I finally won out, and he gave in to the generous extent of allowing me four days to get ready to leave; but he kept muttering under his breath about what would happen to me if I didn't report "without delay."

At last it was all over. After a great deal of confusion incident to my turning in equipment, drawing it out again, and getting vaccinated for everything from flat feet to halitosis, I was sent to the replacement depot for final processing before being sent overseas.

When the Army says that you are to be sent overseas immediately, it means just that. When I got to the replacement depot at Greensboro, I stayed right there for four solid weeks. During the course of these four weeks of inactivity, I was required (along with a group of other officers, most of them chaplains like myself) to attend the showing of a training film every morning. The fact that all of us had seen these films many times before meant nothing to those in charge of the depot. Regulations said that all personnel going overseas had to see these films, and so we saw them. We were also put through the chemical warfare training course and taught how to build a camp, how to put up a shelter half, and how to dig a slit trench. Then, to add a little drama to this dull routine

of training, I suppose, we were taken out to a lake nearby and taught how to abandon a ship that had been torpedoed. I went through four weeks of this, getting ready to go overseas immediately.

The last week of my stay at the replacement depot, I was placed in what they chose to call a "shipment." I discovered that eight other chaplains and about three hundred enlisted men were in the same shipment. That meant that wherever we went, we would all go together. I noticed that the only officers in this shipment were chaplains, but I didn't pay much attention to the fact at the time. On the night we were ordered to the port of embarkation, I was to learn of the serious mistake the Army had made by not assigning a line officer to our shipment. The replacement depot was required to place some officer in charge of every shipment. They picked me. I am sure this choice was made because I was the youngest and also the meanest-looking of the nine chaplains. It meant that I would have upon my frail, young shoulders the responsibility for three hundred enlisted men and (worst of all) eight chaplains. I would be their commanding officer, so to speak, until I delivered them safe and sound to their overseas destination. What a job for a chaplain!

At last the waiting was over and we were sent to the New York Port of Embarkation. During the past month of inactivity I had come to feel a deeper appreciation of the remark once made by Oliver Wendell Holmes that war was nothing but organized boredom. At the port of embarkation we found ourselves in the stew again. Here again we were subjected to inspections, quizzes, and cross-examinations to be sure that we really wanted to go through with this thing.

One thing that stands out in my mind particularly about the port of embarkation was the discussion that arose about the "horseshoe packs." Each of these packs consisted of a woolen blanket, ten tent pegs, two tent poles, and one com-

plete change of clothing. These items were rolled up inside a pup tent into a neat roll about four feet long, and then securely tied. This roll was then bent in the form of a horseshoe and tied over a musette bag. Inside this musette bag one carried a raincoat, a change of clothing, shaving articles, and various odds and ends that he thought might be needed to make life comfortable for the next forty days. The completed pack was then fastened to one's back by a series of intricate and confusing straps that no one but the man who had made them could figure out how to use. The whole rig weighed about forty pounds.

We had learned by this time that we were going to be sent to the European Theater of Operations. All the fighting had ended there the previous April. This was July. And we knew that by this time all the troops in Europe had abandoned their foxhole apartments for the more comfortable civilian hotels and homes that the Army requisitioned from the communities it occupied. For this reason we were no little annoyed at the idea of having to prepare and carry on our backs these horseshoe packs. We griped considerably when, with these heavy packs on our backs, we had to march several miles to the train that would take us to the docks. But what really burned us up was something we learned later. One of the officers in our shipment was a nephew of the port commander. The night before we sailed, this officer had dinner with the port commander. During the course of the evening the matter of the horseshoe packs was brought up, and the port commander was informed that the officers and men didn't take well to the idea. It was reported that when the port commander heard this, he enjoyed a good laugh and then asked, "Do they still require the troops to wear those packs? I put out an order at the beginning of the war that the troops going overseas should wear them because there was a real need for them then. But that was more than two years ago.

The need for the horseshoe packs ended long ago. I've just forgotten to rescind the order."

It was funny to him, but when those useless pack straps were cutting into our shoulders, it wasn't funny to us. But that is the way the Army is run. If a general puts out an order covering some particular matter, his subordinates will continue to obey that order for a million years after the need for the order has ceased to exist, unless the general happens to remember to tell them to stop. And they tell me that the Army builds initiative.

Going Overseas

ABOUT the time I was getting ready to go overseas, a certain cigarette was using as an advertising slogan the initials "L.S. . . . M.F.T." For those of us who sat waiting in the port of embarkation ("P.O.E.") this slogan, with a little change in the initials, expressed our feelings. We went around cheering each other with the singsong phrase "T.S. . . . P.O.E."

Regardless of how much I had wanted to go overseas, when I came to the point where I was actually to board a ship, my knees felt weak and I wasn't at all sure just where my stomach was. There had been times when I had laughed at soldiers for having "gangplank fever," but when I started up that gangplank myself it wasn't a laughing matter.

Perhaps what I had just been through had something to do with my woozy feeling. Our shipment had to march about three miles from the camp to the railway station. To make

the marching more pleasant, the authorities required that we wear winter uniforms and carry those forty-pound horseshoe packs. This was especially appreciated by all concerned since the day on which we set forth was the Fourth of July. (Just for your information, New York is no place to wear an Army winter uniform in July.) When we got to the railway station, we found that the train we were about to board was on a siding. We boarded the train and found our places, four of us to a section . . . and the train remained on the siding. For nearly two hours we sat, crowded in with all our equipment on the day coaches of this train, while all the day's freight of New York Harbor was hauled away. I had never known there were so many freight cars in the world. If all the freight cars in the world had been laid end to end . . . What do I mean by "if"? There they all were, passing slowly by me while I sat in a hot day coach, sweating, sweltering, and swearing.

At last we were taken to the ferry, which we boarded like so many sheep, and were carried over to the pier where our transport was docked. It had taken us four hours to get this far. All this time we had been required to wear those horseshoe packs. It was now two hours past my usual lunch time and all I had been able to put inside my growling belly was a little water from my canteen. Naturally, I was a little out of humor. Some of the bolder members of our shipment had even dared to express disapproval of the manner in which we were being handled. Little did any of us dream what lay ahead.

When the ferry docked at our pier, we unloaded and were met by a Transportation Corps corporal, who told us to go through a certain door, where we would pick up our baggage, and follow the white line up the stairs to board our ship. "Pick up your baggage" may sound like an innocent instruction. But the baggage I had to pick up weighed nearly a hundred

pounds. You can imagine what a guy as short as I am must have looked like, limping and bumping along with a forty-pound pack on my back, a canteen and a cartridge belt around my waist, a three-pound brief case in one hand, and a ninety-pound Valpak dangling from the other arm. On level ground it was tough enough sledding, but when I hit those stairs my number almost came up. One or two flights of the stairs wouldn't have been so bad, but we had to climb all the way from the bottom of the river to the top of the Empire State Building. When I hit the fourth floor and saw those devilish white lines still going up, I knew the fifth floor would be the last . . . for me, anyway. But when I made the fifth floor and saw that there was another still to go, I managed to keep struggling. Maybe the three or four hundred soldiers just back of me helped to keep me moving. I'll never get over those stairs. Hauling all that luggage up six flights of stairs put a crimp in my gait that will always be there.

When I finally made "topside," I found the good old Red Cross there with milk and sandwiches and candy bars. Food and drink had never looked so good before. If the "girls" passing out the refreshments hadn't all been past sixty I think I would have kissed every one of them right then and there.

My struggle to get aboard ship was not ended. For two more hours we had to stand on the pier, waiting for our turn to board the transport *Queen Elizabeth*. We had to wait until some civilian dignitaries got aboard and all their luggage had been carried to their staterooms. But we didn't mind the wait. It gave us a chance to get over that hike up those stairs. When at last we were allowed to go aboard ship, I hoisted my luggage and moved up the gangplank. It wasn't nearly as dramatic as I had imagined it would be. I had read stories and seen pictures of troops boarding their transports in the misty quiet of the early dawn, the whole atmosphere filled with melodrama and the mystery of the unknown adventure which lay ahead. And I

had seen some pictures of troops embarking while the bands played and the flags waved and the crowds cheered. There was none of this when I crawled up the gangplank with a king-sized load of freight on my back. There were no crowds. The flags were furled and the bands were muted. And, as if to wring out the last drop of suspense and drama, I went aboard in the middle of a blistering hot July afternoon. Some send-off for a man who "went out not knowing whither he went"!

At the top of the gangplank was standing a uniformed British officer, giving the G.I.'s directions to their quarters. He was really flounced up in a snappy uniform. At first I thought he was the Chief of the Admiralty. Later I learned that he was more like the character in Gilbert and Sullivan: "A junior partnership is the only ship I ever did see, and now I'm the Ruler of the Queen's Navee." He told me to go up a flight of stairs, turn right, and go down the hallway to Room 619... "old chap." I got to the top of the stairs and noticed that the first room on my left was 618. "Well," I said to myself, "This is luck. My room is close by." Innocent, ignorant me—I started down the hallway: 618, 616, 614, 612, 610... and so on. I walked about a mile, bumping and bouncing my luggage every step of the way. Room 619 had to be there somewhere. At last I met a steward and asked directions.

"619?" he said in his best Cockney. "Sure, it's on the other side of the ship. Go back to that passageway down there and cross over to the other side. You'll find it there."

Back I went, dragging my luggage behind me by this time. I got to the other side of the ship and discovered that all the odd-numbered rooms were on that side. Another half-mile hike and I found my room, 619.

I pushed open the door and started to go in, but I stopped dead in my tracks. There were so many people crowded into that room that I was sure I had gotten into Pennsylvania Station by mistake. It looked like a nylon sale. Finally one of

the men on the inside saw me standing there and invited me in. It was very gracious of him. I discovered that the "stateroom" to which I had been assigned had also been assigned to eleven other guys. Twelve of us were in one room about eight feet wide and fourteen feet long. Twelve beds . . . "beds," they'd said. They were nothing more than iron frames with pieces of canvas tied on. And they were piled one on top of the other, four deep. You needed a slipper spoon to pry yourself in and out of bed. One fat guy had to sleep on the top bunk because he couldn't squeeze between the lower ones. But to make up for all these discomforts, we had a private bathroom—if you could call it private when it had to serve the needs of twelve men. But it did have a tub. Of course, we couldn't use the tub because there was a shortage of fresh water on board ship. The water had been turned off just to make sure that we didn't break any rules and take a bath. There was also one lavatory and mirror to serve twelve men while they shaved. Our stateroom also had a porthole, about the size of an overgrown basketball. The only difficulty was that you had to crawl over two beds in order to look outside.

Oh, well, I should worry, I thought. I could at last put my luggage down and rest. And I think I could have adapted myself to the crowded conditions, if I had not learned that half of the rooms on that deck were empty. The ship's officers graciously explained that we were not sailing with a full load of passengers, so there was no need to use the other rooms. After all, it would just have meant more work for the stewards.

We were very fortunate in being assigned to the *Queen Elizabeth* for our transport. Our trip across to Scotland was made in first-class style. The ship was fast, so we made the trip in four and one-half days. During that time we were more or less free from Army control and things ran very smoothly. We had almost five days without much SNAFU (Situation Normal: All Fouled Up). It was a gay, carefree time. But I

couldn't really enjoy it, because I knew that once we left the ship, life would again become a confusing muddle.

On the fifth day we dropped anchor at Greenock, Scotland. The Army took over again. Through the public address system we received orders as to when and how we were to debark. Boats pulled alongside our ship and we were told what boat we were to board and by what door we were to leave the ship. When the hour came for my shipment to debark, we made our way down the stairs to a doorway opening onto a landing boat that had pulled alongside the ship. As we walked across the gangplank, an officer stood there to check our names and make sure we were boarding the right landing boat! [As you might guess, we had been told to board the wrong boat.] The checking officer had no record of our names or our shipment number. He looked at us—all three hundred of us—as if we were stowaways trying to sneak off the ship. I thought for a moment that he was going to call the M.P.'s and have us all thrown into the brig. We looked at him like dumb sheep. We didn't know what to do but follow the orders that had been given us. It didn't matter one whit to us which landing boat we got in. Anyway, we would just as soon have stayed on the old ship and sailed back to New York; we had already had all the overseas duty we wanted. The checking officer must have guessed what we were thinking, because he removed his angry and annoyed look and hastily invited us to go ashore with him. After all, he seemed to be trying to assure us, he hadn't meant to be so particular. Reluctantly we left the old *Queen* and got into his shabby little landing boat.

When we were taken to the dock, trouble started all over again for us. The Army Transportation Corps had taken over. All the debarking troops were told to line up by shipment numbers on the dock. Then the numbers of the various shipments were called out over the public address system and they were told what trains they were to catch to be taken to their re-

spective destinations. As their shipment numbers were called out and their trains given, the troops moved off. At last the shipment numbers ceased and the P.A. announcer shut off his machine. All the shipments were gone . . . except mine. There we stood, about three hundred of us, patiently waiting to be told where to go. After we had waited for about ten minutes, that fellow on the P.A. bellowed out, "Will the troops standing on the dock move on? Your train is waiting." We looked at each other and asked, "What train?"

Since I was supposed to be in command of this shipment, I decided I had better go see somebody and find out where we were to go. I found one of the transportation officers and asked him what they intended doing with our shipment.

He looked at me angrily and snapped, "Why didn't you listen to the directions? You were told plainly enough what to do."

"Our number was never called," I replied.

The officer looked at me as if he thought I were lying. Then he saw my insignia and realized that I was a chaplain. That made him relax a little. He turned and called a corporal to him. "What happened to Shipment AIB-411 AB?"

The corporal looked bewildered. "I never heard of that number, sir," he answered.

"Well, I have," I retorted as I shoved our shipment orders into his hand.

The officer and the corporal went into a huddle over our orders. Finally they turned to me.

The officer said, "We don't have your shipment on this list. According to our records you aren't supposed to be here."

"Fine!" I ejaculated. "I'm sure all the boys will be happy enough to go back home and wait for a more convenient time to come over. Sorry to have bothered you."

"No, wait a minute," the officer replied hastily, "you can't do that. You are here and I suppose we will have to do some-

thing with you. But how you ever got here is a mystery to me."

"Me, too," I agreed.

The officer continued, "Of course, since we weren't expecting you, we didn't make any arrangements for your rail transportation. But I think we can get you something."

The way he emphasized that "something" made chills run down my spine. I had heard that the best English trains were none too good. The prospects of riding on just any old thing they could scrape up at the last minute was not cheering. And I didn't feel any too good, anyway. Here we had left home and country and come three thousand miles across the ocean to fight for our native land, and we weren't even expected. The Army was surprised to see us. Those were indeed times to try men's souls.

England

AFTER much delay, during which time we stood in the hot sun with heavy packs and winter uniforms, the Transportation Corps in Greenock finally secured our rail transportation to Camp Stone, England. As commanding officer of our group, I was given the transportation-request sheet, which was the only ticket our group had. When I got my first sight of one of those English trains, I knew my troubles were just beginning. Each train car is divided into several separate compartments, each accommodating about eight men. These compartments are entered by a side door that opens outside the train. There are no intratrain connections between the compartments. I couldn't figure out how the conductor would ever get through the train to collect our tickets. More annoying than that, I couldn't see how I would ever be able to keep up with all my men, not being able to see them. Fortu-

nately, the conductor never came through asking for tickets. I suppose the English knew that we were green troops, fresh from the States, who were being taken care of by the proper authorities. Fortunately, too, my troops were so absorbed in the newness of this strange land that it must not have occurred to them to get off the train and wander about. Since I was the only one who knew where we were going, they may have been afraid of getting separated from the main group.

I got my first introduction to wartime restrictions when we got to Glasgow. We had a six-hour stopover there, so we decided to eat supper. The nine of us chaplains went into the station café. Fish was offered for the meat. They had fish soup, fish chowder, fried fish, broiled fish, fish cakes . . . fish any way you might want it, but nothing but fish. So we ordered fish. Just for variety, I decided to order a glass of milk. The waitress politely but firmly informed me that milk was for nursing mothers only.

At ten o'clock that night our train was ready to pull out. After some scurrying around, I got all my soldiers located and got all their luggage on the train. Locating the men was no easy task. Even in the short time we had been in Glasgow many of them had already established beachheads with some of the local girls. Some of these girls came to the train to bid farewell to their newly found friends. There was much handshaking, waving, and shouting good-bye in a good old Scotch accent as we pulled out of the station. It was a gala farewell. My troops had conquered Glasgow.

I will never forget that first night on an English train. The nine of us chaplains were in one small compartment. There was no water, no meals, no place to sleep, and no place but the great out-of-doors to answer the other demands of nature. It was utterly impossible to get into a position that even approximated comfort. The best one could hope for was a place to sit, and as the train lurched and jerked, even that

wasn't always assured. We had all been tired before we started this mad night ride. During the night we couldn't sleep and got terribly bored and worn out just looking at each other. If we closed the windows, it became stiflingly hot. The windows had to be open. But when they were, smoke and cinders blew in and the roar of the rails made conversation a pastime for the leather-lunged only.

To add to our pleasure trip, during the night we had to change trains five times. Each change of trains meant a change of our baggage . . . duffel bags, Valpaks, foot lockers, and all. And we usually had only a few minutes to make the change. We really had to hustle.

When we finally made the last change, it was daylight and we were only thirty miles from our destination. When we got all our baggage on this last train, we learned that it would be at least thirty minutes before we left. Every man in our group immediately went to sleep. It was the first chance we had had to sleep since we had debarked from the *Queen*, and we really took advantage of the opportunity. We were all so dead to the world that not one of us knew when the train started. The first thing we knew, the conductor, the brakeman, the fireman, and the engineer were going through the cars, waking us up and trying to get us off the train. We had arrived unconscious at Camp Stone. A fine way to start overseas duty!

After we had staggered sleepily off the train at the Camp Stone station, we learned that it was still five miles to camp headquarters, where we had to report. I called up the base motor pool and asked for transportation. The officer at the motor pool assured me that trucks would be sent immediately to pick us up. Poor fellow— he had been overseas too long. "Immediately" didn't mean the same thing to him that it meant in America. In England it meant any time within the next week. We hung around the station sleepily, tired, hun-

gry, and irritated, for nearly two hours before the trucks finally came to take us to Camp Stone.

I got my men and baggage loaded into the trucks and then climbed in beside the driver of one of the trucks. As we started our drive to the place to which we had to report, and where I would be relieved of my responsibility for these troops, I sank back and dozed off to sleep again. It would be wonderful to be free of my responsibilities as a commanding officer, I mused. I had nursed these boys all the way from North Carolina to England. I had issued them clothing and equipment, paid them, fed them, put them on K.P., cursed them, and loved them, and now I was going to dump them. And what a joy that would be! Whoever heard of a chaplain being in command of troops, anyway? We were supposed to convert them, not command them.

Such happy thoughts were running through my mind as we drove along in the truck. I pried open one eye just enough to get a glimpse of where we were going. Looking down the road ahead of us, I saw another truck coming down the road to meet us. At first I didn't pay much attention, but as we got closer to the oncoming truck I suddenly realized something was wrong. In my amazement I sat bolt upright. The other truck was on the wrong side of the road. For that matter, so were we. Both trucks were tearing down the road on the wrong side. I shuddered to think of what would happen if one of them suddenly decided to get back on the right side. Before I could do anything or say anything about it, we zoomed past the other truck. My driver must have noticed my anxiety, for he laughed and remarked, "In England, everybody drives on the left-hand side of the road." I felt like a nitwit.

At long last we made headquarters and were signed in, and I turned over my records of the shipment to the proper authorities. I was free of my troops. Now all I had to do was tag along with the other eight chaplains. We were assigned to

a barracks and told to put our baggage in the baggage room. All our baggage had to be inspected, in case we had smuggled over a few spies. After this was done, we were told we could have breakfast. That was wonderful news simply because we didn't know what we were going to get. We headed for the mess hall in high spirits. After all, we hadn't had what you could call a square meal since we left the old *Queen* two days before, and we were getting pretty hungry.

We were served coffee, fried eggs, and bread. Those were the queerest-looking eggs I ever saw. What should have been yellow in them was red—a rich, full-bodied red, like blood. But at a time like that, who would bother to quibble about the eggs? They were eggs and that was all that mattered. It was the bread that got me. I've always had toast for breakfast and the change to bread wasn't easy. However, I do believe I could have changed to any normal bread without too much trouble. But that stuff we were served was beyond the pale of human consumption. In the first place, it was hacked into lumps about the size of a fist. Then, it wasn't cooked. The inside was pure raw dough. The bakers had let it stay in the oven just long enough for it to get warm and to form a hard crust on the outside. The more I chewed it, the larger it got, and the stickier. After five minutes of chewing the stuff, I had to use both hands to pull a wad of it out of my mouth. And my teeth nearly came out with it. Besides all this, it just didn't taste good.

Right after breakfast all of us went to our quarters and got ready to sleep for the rest of the day. After I had taken a shower—my first bath in more than a week—I made my cot. The English furnished us no sheets, but we were well supplied with woolen blankets. It may seem strange that anyone should be sleeping under woolen blankets in July, but in England they were needed. The cold, damp, rainy weather made plenty of cover necessary. In England it is not a

question of whether or not it will rain; it is just a matter of when it will rain.

I went to bed with nothing on but my underwear. In a few seconds I was out of bed, looking for something else to put on. It wasn't that I was cold; it was those woolen blankets. They were warm enough. The only trouble was that while they were being manufactured they were brought too close to the sandpaper-making machinery, and a lot of the sand and glue had gotten mixed up with the blankets. They were beyond all doubt the roughest, "scratchiest" product ever turned out by an assembly line. A few hours of exposure to the raw surface of those blankets would have taken the armor plate off a battleship. That is why I got up and put my clothes on—for protection against the blankets. After that, I slept all right.

The next morning we were all rounded up and taken out to an assembly ground for a period of instruction. The war in Europe had been over for some months, so we couldn't imagine why the authorities felt that we needed instruction in battle procedure. But they felt that we did, so we were given further instruction in the use of the gas mask. Of course, we had had the same instruction and demonstration no less than a dozen times before we had ever come overseas, but we had to take it all over again. When we had started overseas, the authorities in the States had taken our gas masks away from us, saying that there would be no need for them now that the war in Europe had ended. But the authorities in Camp Stone, England, must not have heard that the war was over. They not only gave us another lecture on the gas mask, but they were horrified to hear that we didn't even have gas masks. They hastened to rectify this tragic situation. We were rushed down to the Quartermaster Corps and issued gas masks in such a hurry that you would have thought that the Germans had already launched a gas attack. It would have been too

bad for us if they had. The masks we were given must have been some that had been reclaimed from a Civil War scrap pile. They were really wrecks. Eyepieces were gone from some, others had bad leaks in the rubber hose, and one didn't even have a canister. One officer, when he opened his canvas carrier to inspect the mask inside, found the carrier filled with K-rations, several packs of cigarettes, a pair of sunglasses, and several other items, but no gas mask. Fortunately, we were not asked to sign a receipt for the masks. This meant that the Army could not hold us responsible for them. The next morning, when we were climbing onto the trucks to leave Camp Stone and continue our journey to the Continent, for some strange reason not a single officer had his gas mask with him. By some oversight everyone of us had misplaced his gas mask while he was packing. They had been conveniently left in our quarters, where I am sure they were reclaimed by the boys from the Quartermaster Corps. I have an idea that those same masks had been issued and reissued to men passing through Camp Stone for many months. No doubt, after each shipment went through, the Quartermaster Corps men went around automatically collecting the gas masks that they had issued the day before. Trying to get rid of those worn-out gas masks must have been very discouraging.

It had been decided by the powers that be that we nine chaplains were to be flown across the English Channel to Paris. I would have preferred taking a slower but more scenic trip by train and steamer. But my desire had little effect in determining my manner of travel. We were sent down to London, and from there to an airfield in the suburbs. Here we had to go through various checking processes to make sure that we were legitimate passengers. Our money was examined. Some of us had already changed most of our American money into English pounds. However, we learned at the

airfield that we would not be allowed to take any foreign money into France. It sounded strange to hear the good old greenback referred to as "foreign currency." It was necessary for us to remind ourselves constantly that we, and not all these other people we saw, were the foreigners now. Our money, both American and English, was changed into French francs. One franc was worth about two cents. This, combined with the fact that the French monetary system, like the American, is a decimal system, made trading in francs an easy matter. It was much simpler to trade here than it had been in England. The trouble was, the French didn't use much coin. Nearly all their money was paper. And a paper one-franc note (worth only two cents) was almost as large as our American dollar bill. The result was that you needed a wheelbarrow-load of money to have anything at all. Another difficulty was that the French money was too long and too wide to fit into American billfolds. This made it necessary for us to fold the money up before we could put it into our billfolds. Whenever we wanted to make a purchase, it was necessary for us to unfold all our money so that we could see what we had. And that was bad, for it revealed to the store clerk just how much money we had, and he could set his prices accordingly.

After the inspections had been completed, the plane that was to carry us to Paris taxied into position and we got busy loading our baggage aboard. Then we climbed in, and off we soared, headed for Paris.

From our elevation we got a pretty good view of London. It was sobering to see the great amount of bomb damage. But we were soon to see that the damage to London was little compared to the damage to the French villages and towns. As we flew over France, the number of shell pocks, bomb craters, gaunt trees, and wrecked buildings and homes was simply appalling. It did not require any great imagina-

tion to understand what the French people had been through, and what the American and British soldiers had suffered in their drive across France. It looked so quiet and still as we flew over. It didn't seem possible that just a few months before, men had lain dying and dead on those same peaceful hills.

My usual luck caught up with me again when we started to land at the airfield near Paris. The pilot of our plane made the usual circling approach to the field and then started down in a gentle glide for the landing. As I looked out the window and watched the buildings grow larger and larger as we came closer to the ground, it seemed to me that we were coming in mighty high and fast for a landing. The pilot cut his engines and we dropped down fast. Then all of a sudden the engines roared up again and the plane pulled away from the field in a sharp climb. Since then I have flown a good bit. But in spite of my many hours in the air, I am still uneasy during a takeoff or a landing. It would be a gross understatement to say that when our pilot was unable to make the landing, I was uneasy; I was scared silly. When we had regained some altitude, the pilot circled around again and came in for another try at a landing. This time we came in a little slower and lower. I felt easier about the landing. Then I felt the bump of the wheels as they hit the runway of the temporary landing field. We hadn't taxied far before there was a loud bang and the plane tipped over. A tire had blown out. The left wing caught in the runway and the plane spun around, bouncing and jerking to a sudden stop. We inside the plane were a tangled mass of trunks, Valpaks, arms, legs, brief cases, and heads. We had really been thrown all over the interior of that plane. Fortunately, no one had been injured. But as I climbed out of the plane, I couldn't help thinking that this was sure a fine way to make your debut in Paris—coming in with a bang and a flat tire.

Paris

WHAT would you say if someone were to come up to you and ask you if you would like to have a two-weeks' trip to Paris with all expenses paid? You needn't answer; I know what you would say. Well, that is about what happened to me. I tried for two years to get overseas. At long last my chance came, and when it did come it came with a bang. As I have told you, I was sent off in such a rush that I hardly had time to get my family home. Things happened in such a hurry that I was sure that I was being sent on some kind of a rush-order secret mission . . . secret orders, veiled movements, cloak-and-dagger activities, and all that sort of thing. When I hit Scotland and learned that I wasn't even expected, it knocked some of the romance out of my adventure. And if I had had any notions of the importance of my mission left when I hit Paris, they would have been knocked for another loop.

When I called up the staff chaplain to inform him that I had now arrived and he could stop worrying, that everything was under control, that worthy gentleman nearly fell off his chair. He began to shoot questions at me. "Who are you? . . . When did you get here? . . . How did you get here? . . . Where are you?" These I answered, but when he asked, "Why did you come?" I looked around to be sure I was in the right place. The man I was reporting to, the man who was to determine my future overseas, the man who was to give me my assignments, hadn't even known I was coming or why I had been sent! Well, that proved it. My new commanding officer hadn't even known I was coming. That is how secret my orders were. Would I be understating the facts if I said that this cool and uncertain reception gave rise in me to grave apprehension? Well, it did. Seeing that no one at all was expecting me or knew what to do with me in this foreign land, I was tempted to climb back on the plane and go back home. Instead, I climbed on a jeep and was driven to the staff chaplain's headquarters.

When I reported to him, he said, "We are mighty glad to see you. We weren't notified that you were coming, but we will find a place for you. There are plenty of men over here who have had a tough time of it and would like to be relieved. But it will take us some time to work out the transfers. In the meantime, put your things at my house and then spend your time as you like. You might be interested in a visit to Paris. Do whatever you like, come and go as you please, see all the sights of Paris, but report back here in ten days to see if we have anything for you."

Now, can you imagine that! Ten days with nothing to do but to hobnob around Paris. I looked in my pocketbook and counted my money. Two thousand francs—about forty dollars. I thought that would be enough to do about anything I would like to do. I had been told that it was against military law to eat in any of the civilian cafés. That made it necessary for me to eat in the Red Cross hotels.

I was starting out to see Paris on forty dollars. When I went down to the subway (called the Métro in Paris), I learned that all American soldiers could ride the cars without paying a fare. I could ride anywhere in metropolitan Paris without spending a cent.

As soon as I got to town, I began looking for one of those Red-Cross-sponsored places to eat. It wasn't difficult to find one, for the Red Cross had taken over about every hotel in the city. The one I went into was really a swanky place. From its marble halls and fine appointments I could tell that in peacetime it had been the stopping place for the world's wealthy. I walked in as if I owned the place, and had a fine supper . . . for a total cost of twenty cents. I wasn't getting rid of my money very fast.

I overheard an interesting conversation while I was eating supper. Since I had arrived so recently from the States, it struck me as rather funny. Four young lieutenants were sitting at a table near me. Perhaps they could tell that I was fresh from home, for they were talking loudly enough for me to hear what they were saying. It went something like this.

"No, the folks back home don't know there is a war on!" one of them stated.

Another one agreed: "I should say not. All you can read about in the papers is strikes and demands for higher pay and less work."

The third one added his opinion: "All they are interested in or care about is having a good time. Play, play, and more play—that is all that interests them."

Just at that moment another lieutenant walked up to their table and said, "I missed my game of golf today. Any of you fellows care to go out to the club with me tomorrow for a game of golf?"

His question was answered by a chorus of yeses.

Incidentally, although these officers all had several ribbons on their tunics, I didn't notice any combat stars.

While I was eating my supper, another chaplain joined me at the table. He was one of the eight other chaplains who had been with me ever since I had left the States. Together we mapped out a plan for seeing all the interesting sights of Paris in the ten days we had free. We got out one of the maps of the city that the Red Cross had supplied us with, and looked over the list of places recommended as having special interest. After some discussion we decided it would be best for us to go to Montmartre, a very high hill on the outskirts of Paris. From there we would be able to see nearly all of Paris and could decide what to see during the coming days. We would also have the opportunity of seeing the famous Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, which was situated at the top of this hill. That problem settled, we went into the Métro and went out to the foot of Montmartre.

After we got out of the Métro, we discovered that we would have to climb about a mile before we would be on top of Montmartre. This would not have been so bad if the street leading up the hill had been fairly straight. But it wandered in and out among the stores and houses, as if some meandering snake had laid it out. When we got into the valley between the houses, we couldn't see the hill. To be sure we were still going in the right direction, I decided that here was as good a time as I would ever find to use my limited knowledge of French. I would ask some of the people we met on the streets if we were still going in the right direction. As we climbed the hill, we overtook two French girls who seemed to be going in the same direction that we were. I asked my fellow chaplain if he thought I could risk asking them the way to Montmartre without having them think that I was trying to flirt with them. He told me to go ahead since they probably would never know what I said, anyway. So, clearing my throat and mumbling a few practice words of French, I called to the girls. They both turned to me and said, "Yes?" only they said it in French.

Then I began the labored process of asking them if they could direct us to the top of the hill by the nearest street. It was quite a job. I floundered for words, made wild gestures with my hands, threw in a little Indian sign language for good measure, and even tried a little semaphoring. The girls stood staring blankly at me while I went through these gymnastics. I could see that I was getting nowhere fast. At length I turned to the other chaplain, resigned to failure. I said to him, "I don't know what is wrong, but they don't seem to understand me."

As soon as I said that in English, one of these dear little French girls piped up, "Oh, you speak English very well. If you can ask me in English, maybe I can tell you what it is that you want to know."

Honestly, I think if I hadn't been born an "old Southern Gentleman," I would have strangled me a girl right then and there.

We did at last reach the top of Montmartre and it was a beautiful sight. From that spot, several hundred feet above Paris, we could look out and see that whole city. By using a map we could locate nearly all the famous buildings . . . Notre Dame, the Opera, the Tomb of Napoleon, the Arch of Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, and a number of other places. We spent about two hours up there, just looking at the great panorama of Paris below us.

Just as we were about ready to start back to Paris, we were startled by the squeaky honk of a jeep horn. Turning, we saw an American jeep driven by an American private. We stopped him and asked him how in the world he had ever gotten that jeep up there, as there were several sets of steps in the so-called streets.

"Oh," he answered lightly, "I just drove right up the steps. I'm about ready to go back now. Would you like to ride or would you prefer to walk?"

We decided that we would rather ride, so we climbed into the jeep and the driver started down those long, winding, twisting, rough streets. When we came to the steps, he slowed down a little and bumped right on down them. If your hips are too big and you have been thinking of going on a diet, just give up the idea. I know a much quicker way of reducing. Just ride a few miles over cobblestone streets in a jeep. I guarantee that will take the flesh off.

The ten days' free time in the beautiful and exciting French capital came to an end all too soon. One morning, while I was dressing to go into town again, the telephone rang. I answered it. The staff chaplain was calling to let us know that he wanted us to come to his office that day to receive our orders. The vacation was over. It was now time to start back to work. I broke the sad news to the other chaplains and we got ready to go to the chief's office.

When we arrived there, we found several other chaplains already seated in the chief's office. We learned that they were staff chaplains of the various commands that formed the United Strategic Air Forces in Europe. One of them was from the Ninth Service Command, one was from the Ninth Engineer Command, and two were from other commands. They were there trying to get additional chaplains assigned to their commands. The Army's method of allowing personnel to return to the States under the point system had taken several of the long-term chaplains back to the United States. These command chaplains needed replacements and they had come to the chief in the hope that some of us could be assigned to them. When we came in, they gave us the once-over, each trying to pick the man that he wanted for his command. I felt like a horse on an auction block. Any moment I expected one of them to ask me to open my mouth so that he could check my teeth. After this examination the chief explained that before he made the assignments, he wanted to offer us the opportunity to volunteer, as

some of the assignments were harder than others. Some of us were to be assigned to engineer battalions whose job it would be to build advance airfields. Since these units were slated for shipment to the Pacific, the chaplains assigned to them could expect a pretty rugged life, often being under enemy fire. Others were to be assigned to less hazardous and much more comfortable jobs as chaplains of service groups stationed at fixed bases. The chief explained that he wanted to give us the chance to select our own assignments so that if we selected rough assignments, he would be free from all responsibility. If we wanted to kick later, we wouldn't have anybody to kick but ourselves.

When the chief got through explaining his plan, he announced that he was now ready to hear from volunteers. If we had been the raw, ignorant recruits we were when we came into the Army, we all would have jumped at the chance to volunteer for the hardest jobs. But we were a long way from that. All of us were men who had had at least two years of military service. During those two years we had learned a good bit about Army methods and run-arounds. One thing we all knew: A man was a plain fool if he volunteered for anything. So the chief's invitation that we volunteer for these jobs fell on deaf ears. We sat there looking at him as if we had all just matriculated in a school for deaf mutes. If silence is golden, the monetary value of those next few moments would have amounted to thousands of dollars. We were afraid even to clear our throats or blow our noses. The slightest movement, we knew, would be accepted as a sign that one was volunteering. It was like being at an auction sale where the man who winks his eye or scratches his nose wins the booby prize.

The chief must have expected just such a response. At any rate, he showed no sign of disappointment that we didn't all leap at the chance to volunteer. Assuming that there was no need of waiting any longer for one of us to commit himself, he

announced that he would assign part of us to the Ninth Service Command and part of us to the Ninth Engineer Command. The orders would be out that day and we would pick them up the next morning, he concluded, just before we took off for our respective places of assignment.

• 9 •

Germany

IT happened to be my luck to get assigned to the Ninth Service Command, whose headquarters were located in Luxemburg. Four other chaplains drew the same assignment. So early one morning we were taken out to the airfield, where we loaded all our gear on a C-47 for our flight to this new job. Of course, we knew that this would be just another stopover for us, as this was another headquarters and we knew that we would not be assigned permanently to any headquarters outfit. Headquarters assignments were too easy. We would never be lucky enough to get one of those. Men assigned to a headquarters had hotels and private homes in which to live. They had offices in which to do their work. They had churches and chapels in which to hold their religious services . . . some of them in the oldest and most beautiful churches of Europe. The chaplains in headquarters outfits even had bathrooms, and nice mess halls

in which to eat. It was the silliest folly to think that green recruits like ourselves would be assigned to such luxury. We were simply to report there and to await further orders that would send us to battalions and service groups in the forward areas, where a bath was a luxury that was highly prized and seldom experienced.

We landed at the airfield outside Luxemburg without any mishaps, and after waiting for only three hours, got a truck to take us into the city. We made our way to the office of the command chaplain and reported in. At this office we were properly welcomed and told that we would be billeted in a local hotel until we were given our orders to move on to other fields of labor.

While we were getting acquainted with the officer personnel of the command chaplain's staff, one of the chaplains who had spent his entire time overseas with the headquarters began to shed bitter tears of remorse on our shoulders. He was very much distressed that we, and not he, were being given jobs with the forward groups. It appeared to grieve him to the breaking point that the powers that be had passed over him and had chosen to send us into this great field of endeavor. I gathered that he was tired of the life of ease that he had been living. He had grown restless and bored with sitting in a well-padded swivel chair in an office in a large city where convenience and cleanliness were the order of the day. It bothered him no end that all the officers shaved every day, wore clean uniforms, and were expected to bathe at least three times a week. He also pointed out how gloomy the gastronomic situation was. Wasn't it unbearable, he asked, that they were served steak and fried chicken so often and were forced to down a bowl of ice cream at least four times a week? It was all getting him down. How he envied us because we were being sent to places where life would be a little more rugged! Oh, the joy, he said, of having to sleep on the ground, of sloshing through mud

and rain, of having to wear the same uniform until it got sticky and stiff with oil and grime, of eating C rations every day, and of holding religious services to the ominous tune of bombs and bullets! Really, it made my heart ache to see this man, a virtual prisoner to a life of ease and comfort, literally begging to change places with one of us. How I wished I could grant him his heart's desire and change places with him—and I meant it! I suppose he thought that all this baloney about how he wished he could be one of us made us feel proud and happy that we would soon be in places where Jap soldiers could draw beads on our grime-covered chests. But as far as I was concerned, he could have the job.

While we were listening to this sob story of too much comfort, another one of the headquarters chaplains came in. This one had his clean blouse nearly covered with ribbons. Not long after he learned that we were all fresh from the States, he began to call attention (not too subtly) to his display of ribbons. We carefully paid no attention. He came at us again from another angle, hoping that one of us would ask him what the ribbons were for. But we still gave him the cold shoulder of disdain. Finally he took a desperate leap. Turning to one of the other headquarters chaplains, he said, "Say, Frank, I'm having trouble with my combat stars. I have so many that I can't get them all on my E.T.O. ribbon. I wonder if I could wear two E.T.O. ribbons so I would have room for all my battle stars."

Thank heavens there weren't many chaplains like that!

Several interesting things happened while I was in Luxemburg, but I had already spent so much time traveling around from one place to another, having nothing to do, that I was incapable of enjoying them. It didn't take me long to see all the interesting sights . . . to be exact, the one sight I had energy enough to see. Luxemburg is built on two mountains, with a very deep valley separating the city into two sections. Old stone

bridges span this valley, connecting the two parts of the city. Most of the old buildings, the ancient forts, and the other things that the ordinary traveler would be interested in seeing are down in the valley. I stood on a stone bridge overlooking the valley and got my look at these historic buildings. But when I thought of the long hike down the side of the mountain, the long walk in the valley, and the tortuous climb back up the mountain and to my hotel, the historic buildings gave me hysterics. And that was that. I never saw them, except as the birds see them.

I spent most of my leisure time (which was all my time) in my hotel room with the other chaplains. We played cribbage. Whenever we tired of that, we would sit on the sun porch and watch the people of Luxemburg pass by. Those people were the handshakingest people I have ever seen. Every time two of them met on the street, they shook hands. At first I thought they must be old friends who hadn't seen each other since the Germans came. But after sitting on my sun porch for a few days, I got to know a number of these people real well. And I noticed that the same two men or women would shake hands all over again every time they met.

Incidentally, Luxemburg was the cleanest, friendliest city I found in all of Europe. The streets, the homes, and the people were all clean. And the people were friendly in a way that made you feel that they meant it . . . not in the way that a man who owes you ten bucks is friendly. And the people there were intelligent. I was in a store one day, trying to buy something to send my wife. A lady and a man were making purchases ahead of me, so I waited until the clerk had finished with them before I made my purchase. The lady was talking to the clerk in French and he was answering her in what I thought was perfect French. After this lady had departed, the clerk waited on the man. This fellow talked in German. Without batting an eye the clerk started talking in the same language. Then my turn came. I started talking to the clerk in English, just as I would have done if I had been in a drugstore in New York. The

clerk answered me in better English than I was using—he didn't leave off his r's. Well, that meant that this clerk in a little store in Luxemburg could speak at least four languages: French, German, English, and his own native tongue . . . perhaps even Sanskrit. Do you think a clerk in an average American store could do that?

One day I walked into the Army Post Exchange to pick up my rations for the week. I noticed a sergeant sitting at a table off to one side of the room. He had a ledger and a money box with him, as if he were selling something or taking bets on the races. Naturally, I asked him what he was selling.

"Sheets," he said. "You want any?"

"You going into competition with Cannon?" I asked.

"Nope. Just trying to get rid of some excess sheets. We are tired of hauling them around."

"How much?"

"Sixty francs."

In case you are as dumb as I was, that was about thirty cents.

I bargained with the sergeant: "That is pretty cheap. What's wrong with the sheets?"

The sergeant sighed. "Everybody asks that. There is nothing wrong with them. They never have been used . . . not even laundered. That is what the sixty francs is for—laundry. If you pay for the laundry of one clean sheet, you can have it. Simple as that."

I thought: But why wash a clean sheet? Oh, well, why try to understand why the Army did some things!

"How many can I buy?" I asked.

"Two sheets and two pillowcases."

I didn't want them, but who could pass up a bargain like that? So I bought the sheets and pillowcases and sent them home to my wife. Sixty cents for two sheets and two pillowcases when you folks here in the States couldn't have bought them for sixty dollars! Don't you just love the Army?

By the way, if you ever need any sheets, just drop down to

the Rue du Rogue, Luxemburg, and tell them that Harry sent you . . . or maybe it was Kilroy.

There came times during my tour of the E.T.O. when I had cause to wonder just how it was that we had come to win the war. I had cause to wonder just how it was that General "Ike" had kept up with his armies. If he had had the same trouble locating an army or a command headquarters that I had, then I didn't see how he had ever led our soldiers to victory. Of course, it may be that I was suspected of being a war criminal, or a spy of some sort from some sort of enemy. But whatever the reason, I found that it was very difficult for me to locate a certain command headquarters.

After several days of inactivity at the Ninth Service Command Headquarters in Luxemburg, I was given orders assigning me to the Ninth Engineer Command. That was all that my orders stated. They didn't bother to burden me with the insignificant detail of where this headquarters was located. Of course, I was reasonably sure that it was in Europe, so that cut down my area of search considerably. The chaplain at the Ninth Service Command was helpful in telling me that he thought the Ninth Engineers were located in Frankfort, Germany—at least they had been, the last time he had heard from them. So arrangements were made for my air transportation to Frankfort. The chaplain of the Ninth Engineers was called on the telephone and told when and at what field I would arrive in Frankfort. It was my understanding that he would be there to meet me and would have a truck ready to haul my equipment to town. So, trustingly, I took off for Frankfort.

My usual Army luck took wings with me and landed at Frankfort just a little before I did. Those little gremlins that had always managed to gum up my affairs did a bang-up job at Frankfort. We landed at an ATC base, and when I got out of the plane, I looked around for the chaplain who was supposed

to meet me. No chaplain. "Well," I said to myself, "he is just a little late. He will be along after a while." Some German PW's happened along just then, so I got them to take my baggage from the plane and take it to the waiting room of the air depot. I had lunch there and discovered, much to my joy, that my money would go a great deal further in German marks than it had in French francs. Why this was so, I will never understand, since the Army set up its own exchange rates. But in Germany I got a nice lunch for two marks (twenty cents) and a haircut for one half-mark (five cents).

After waiting for about two hours for the chaplain to show up, I got impatient. I decided that I would try to call him. I asked the sergeant behind the main desk at the air depot how I could contact the Ninth Engineer Command.

He looked rather puzzled. "Ninth Engineers? I don't believe I ever heard of them. Where are they supposed to be?"

"I was told they were in Frankfort," I replied.

"Well, in that case you can call the Central Locator File and they can tell you where they are."

So I called up the Central Locator File and asked them to give me the number of the Ninth Engineers. From the response I got, you would think I had asked them to give me the number of the private telephone of the chief head-hunter of Salamac Island.

"Ninth Engineers? Never heard of them. No record in our office. Are you sure they are in Europe? Maybe you had better try the Pacific Theater."

Well, when I get mad, I'm a determined little rascal. And right then I got mad. I swore by the beard of a purple saint that I would find the Ninth Engineers if it took me the rest of my life. There was but one thing left to do. General Ike's headquarters didn't know where the Ninth Engineers were, the Ninth Service Command didn't know, the Central Locator File didn't know, the ATC base didn't know . . . the whole War De-

partment didn't know. As a last resort I turned to the only source of authority—the enlisted man. I went outside the air depot and hailed a truck.

"Soldier," I said to the driver, "do you happen to know where the Ninth Engineer Command Headquarters is located?"

"Sure, Chappy," was his quick reply. "I was out there just yesterday . . . took a load of meat out to them. They are at Keidrick."

"Good. You are the only man in the Army who knows where they are. What an intelligence officer you would make . . . a lousy one—you know too much! Could you take me out there with all this baggage?"

"Yes, sir," he agreed. "Hop in. And say, let me tell you about that little blonde I saw out there yesterday. . . ."

I was not a little pleased with myself for the amount of effort and detective work it had taken to locate the Ninth Engineers. But I was noted for determination and detective work, and so I succeeded where lesser men would have failed. No doubt General Ike had long since given up the search. I was sorely tempted to write a letter to the chief of staff and tell him where this command was located. But I gave up the idea before I carried it through. Some clerk (and I do mean Clerk) of the colonel's would have intercepted the letter and never allowed it to get to the general's desk. Anyway, they would have thought, very likely, that I was just trying to show off. Why, even the best brains in the Intelligence Department hadn't been able to locate this command.

I checked in with the command chaplain of the Ninth Engineers and asked if there was anything for me to do.

"No," he assured me, "just stick around for a few days until we get out your orders sending you to your new outfit."

You see, I still didn't have a job. For nearly three months now I had been taking a tour of Europe, going from one headquarters to another. But the gravy train was about to run out

of steam. This was the last stop before I was sent to the battalion whose chaplain I was to be. I was being sent down through the chain of command like a reprimand. I could understand now why it took so long for an order to be carried out. An order took the same channel that I had been taking, and it had taken me three months to get through.

After three days I was back again to see if the orders had been cut and if the personnel there knew where I was to be sent.

The command chaplain answered my question. "Yes, the orders will be ready tomorrow. We will arrange for a plane to take you to your battalion."

"What battalion is it?" I asked.

"The 844th."

"Where are they now?"

"Paris."

Now, wouldn't that take the starch out of your crackers? Here I had been hunting all over Europe for the battalion I was supposed to join, and when I finally did locate it, I discovered that it was in Paris, where I had started out, while I was now in Germany. I learned that this battalion was located at the same airfield at which I had landed when I had first come to Paris. As a matter of fact, it was their tents we had seen while coming in for the landing. And it was one of their trucks that had taken us to the Paris headquarters of the E.T.O. Now, you, being a civilian and burdened with troublesome thoughts of how to save money and time, are bound to ask, "Why couldn't you have been assigned right then and there, or at least before you left Paris?" What a foolish question! In the first place, that is too logical an idea for Army use. In the second place, it makes sense; and that, as we learned to say in Germany, is *verboten*.

Well, since I had to leave Germany after only three days, I decided to see what I could of the place. So I requested a

jeep and driver and went to Frankfort. I rode from one end of that city to the other, and I don't think I saw as much as a chicken house that was still standing. The destruction of property that had taken place there was beyond description. It had once been a great modern city. But when I saw it, it was the nearest thing to a huge pile of bricks and stones that I had ever seen. In some places the buildings had completely disappeared except for their foundations. But most of the buildings still had at least two walls standing. There were no roofs. The atomic bomb may have razed Hiroshima, but the continual blockbuster attacks upon Frankfort must have done just as much damage. Despite this vast destruction, however, the city was filled with people. And they looked clean and well fed. How they stayed clean and where they all slept no one I asked seemed to know. The Germans are ingenious and they had found a way.

As I said, I never saw such destruction in my life, yet I noticed a peculiar contrast. We drove out of the city for a few miles to General Ike's headquarters. He was established in what I was told had once been the record division of I. G. Farben Industries. There were three very fine buildings, covering several acres of land. They represented the latest thing in construction, and not a single one of them showed any bomb damage. How they could have escaped damage when all of Frankfort was leveled was a mystery to me. Of course, it might have been planned that way. Maybe the general had decided in London that he would like to have those buildings for his headquarters, and had given orders that they should not be damaged. Or maybe they had wanted to keep the records there intact. Or . . . oh well, who was I to try to understand such curious things?

Paris Again

I PACKED my bags once more, had my money changed from German marks back to French francs, picked up my orders, signed out, bade farewell to Germany, and went out to the airfield and boarded the plane. I went through these motions automatically. I had made so many moves since coming to Europe that moving had become a habit. And I was beginning to think that the Romans had had it all wrong. All roads didn't lead to Rome. They all led to Paris. No matter where I went, it seemed that sooner or later I would wind up back in Paris.

When I landed back at the same field on which I had first arrived in Paris, I called the headquarters of the 844th Aviation Engineer Battalion and told them to send a truck for me and my baggage—their new chaplain had at last arrived. In short order the truck arrived and I was driven over to the bat-

talion area. Much to my surprise, the place was deserted. I had had visions of the commanding officer and his staff turning out the whole battalion in a parade of welcome. But no one was there to bid me welcome—not even the battalion mascot, a mongrel pup. The driver of my truck hastened to explain this terrible breach of courtesy. It seemed that everybody had gone to a beer party.

I was curious to know what they were celebrating. Surely, it wasn't the fact that they had a new chaplain.

At my question, the truck driver reassured me, "No, sir. We just got a new commanding officer, and we like him so much better than we did the last one that we thought we had better have a little party about it."

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon and I was hungry. There was little chance of getting anything in the officer's mess, so I decided to go to the party too. I couldn't and wouldn't drink any of the beer, but I might be able to find a sandwich or two. So after I had unloaded all my baggage in the tent that had been assigned to me, I asked the truck driver to take me to the battalion party.

When I got there, I found that most of the men were down at the swimming pool. On my way to the pool I met several of the battalion officers . . . all dripping wet.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked one of these officers.

"Just took a swim in the pool," he smilingly replied while the water made a little puddle where he stood.

"No bathing suit, I suppose," I commented.

He grimaced. "Wouldn't have had a chance to put one on even if I had owned one. I was thrown in the pool—entirely against my will. You had better stay away from there. This is a party for the enlisted men of the battalion, and they have decided to throw all the officers in the pool without benefit of a bathing suit. If you go down there, they will probably throw you in too."

I thanked him for the warning, but decided that I would go down to the pool anyway. It was a cold day and the prospects of taking a swim in the pool while fully dressed were not pleasing. But it would be fun to see the others tossed in. When I got to the pool I was surprised to see that the enlisted men had taken hold of the commanding officer, a lieutenant colonel, and were preparing to throw him into the icy waters of the pool. He was putting up some resistance but I could see that it was all in fun. The enlisted men pulled the colonel up onto one of the diving towers. One of them got hold of an arm and a leg while another took the colonel's other arm and leg. Then they gave the colonel a great heave ho and sent him flying through the air and into the pool. He came up spluttering and uttering a few unprintable descriptions of the G.I.'s.

All the enlisted men on the warm, dry bank of the pool roared in laughter. It was a great day for them. The colonel swam to the edge of the pool and climbed out. Then he climbed back onto the diving tower from which he had been hurled, and on which the two enlisted men who had hurled him were still standing. When the colonel got to the top, he dared the two enlisted men to follow him in some dives. But their clothes were dry and the tower was high, so they demurred. The colonel insisted until one of the men gave in and agreed to follow the colonel. He was supposed to be an expert diver, and felt that he could do anything the colonel could do. To everybody's surprise, that plucky little colonel executed a most beautiful and difficult dive (the name of which I don't know)—and he did this while dressed in dripping-wet G.I. clothes. The enlisted man who had taken the colonel's dare stood there in open-mouthed amazement. His embarrassment was great because he knew that he couldn't make that good a dive. He had to back down. And the new colonel became the hero of the battalion.

By the way, they didn't throw me into the pool—they were too busy with the colonel.

Three weeks after I had joined the staff of the 844th Aviation Engineer Battalion, we got our orders to move from Paris to Camp Detroit, a mudhole located just far enough away from Rheims, France, to make it impossible to get into that city on a regular pass. As I have indicated, the outfit to which I had been assigned was slated for transfer to the Pacific Theater of Operations. The order sending us to Camp Detroit was the first step in the plan to send us on to some island in the Pacific. Camp Detroit was one of the so-called redeployment camps. I have often wondered who the guy was that set up those camps and gave them their names. Even though all the men who were sent to these camps were destined for further overseas service, the camps were all given nostalgic names. When I rode around through the Rheims area, I saw camps with such names as Detroit, Washington, San Antonio, Macon, New York, Chicago, and the like. To ride over this area and see the names of the camps, one would think he was right in the heart of the good old U.S.A.

Ever since I had learned that I was going to be sent on to the Pacific, I had been reading with special interest all the information put out about these redeployment camps—where they were, how they were set up, what facilities they had, and other things about them. I had known that there was the possibility that I would be in one of them for several months, so I had wanted to know all I could about them. The best source of information was the Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes*. Hardly a week passed without its pages echoing the praises of the redeployment camps. I had been particularly interested in the things they had said about Camp Detroit, though at that time I had had no idea that I would be sent there; I hadn't thought I would be that lucky. To be sent to Camp

Detroit would be like being sent on a vacation with pay, it had seemed to me. *Stars and Stripes* had boasted that Camp Detroit had hot and cold running water, an adequate supply of showers, a theatre, and a 110-per-cent-efficient special services office that provided all kinds of good entertainment for the men while they waited. Camp Detroit was beautifully landscaped, the newspaper had gone on, with paved roads, gravel paths, and grassy terraces. Dining rooms were set up there that even had tablecloths and real silverware. And as for entertainment—the U.S.O. used this camp as its headquarters. There was a good show going on all the time. . . . It hadn't seemed possible that there could be such a place in all of Europe. You can imagine my surprise when I learned that our own battalion was going to this very same Camp Detroit for redeployment.

Since it had rained nearly every day I had been in "sunny" France, I wasn't surprised when I got up on the morning when we were to move and saw that it was still raining. I had hoped that we would have a good day for the move. But, rain or no rain, like the mail, we had to go. Brother, let me assure you it was a miserable trip. If you would like to know what it was like, pick a day when the temperature is down to about thirty-five and the rain is coming down pretty steady. Then get in an open truck, so that the wind and rain can beat in on you all the time, and take a hundred-mile trip. I don't think you will want to do that very often.

However, since we all knew that we were going to such a delightful spot as Camp Detroit, we just gritted our teeth and toughed it out. At long last we reached Camp Detroit and were assigned to our camping areas. We skidded and slipped down the "paved streets" to this area, and pulled our convoy to a halt before the beautifully landscaped hollow in which we were supposed to camp. Naturally, we thought the camp officers had made a mistake. The place where we had

been told to make our camp was a lake, and a very lovely one at that. Undaunted by this setback, we unloaded our trucks and made camp in the lake. Fortunately, the water in it turned out to be only about six inches deep. For two feet of insecure footing below the water, the lake was soupy mud. But this had great advantages. As long as we camped there we were never troubled by things getting dusty.

As for the showers, we found out they had them all right. The only trouble was that the water never had been connected to them. And the only hot water was what you could heat in your helmet. The way to get it to run was to get someone to stand on a box and pour it over your head as you tried to bathe.

The much-bragged-about theatres of Camp Detroit turned out to be about as big a flop as Casey at the Bat. We had all read in *Stars and Stripes*, (sometimes called "Bars and Gripes," and sometimes more accurately than that but less printably) that Camp Detroit had the finest theaters in all the E.T.O. I couldn't question the authority of that statement; but if it was true, then the Army Special Service Division should be investigated by the Truman Committee when Harry gets back to the Senate. Like the rest of "beautiful, luxurious, comfortable Camp Detroit," the theatres were still in the blueprint stage. The authorities there, however, had managed to throw up a large tent and install seats consisting of a single, one-by-six-inch board.

Our luck was good in one respect. The day after we landed in camp, news went out that the famous Rockettes from New York were to appear in the theater. Since the theater would hold only a thousand soldiers (that is, it was large enough to hold two hundred and fifty civilians), tickets were issued for the three-day-run of the show; only those holding tickets would be allowed to see the show. I was lucky and drew a ticket which was good on the first day of the show.

So, at the time appointed I hustled over to the theater to see the show. I could almost say I swam over, since there was a regular downpour of rain. The line had already formed and I took my place, along with the nine hundred other soldiers—all ahead of me. This was the first chance most of these men had had in a long time to see American beauty in the flesh, and the boys weren't taking any chances of missing out on this. After about an hour of standing in line I got inside the theatre. Another hour passed, while I balanced like a chicken on the one-by-six-inch plank called a seat, before the show got started. I was so far back in the theater that I couldn't hear a word that was said by the characters on the stage. This situation was remedied by the use of a public address system—which worked off and on, mostly off. Just about the time some comedian would get to his punch line, the speaker would sputter and buzz and die out. But that didn't keep me from looking. However, even the enjoyment of just looking was destined to be short-lived. The show had been under way about half an hour when some of the G.I.s crowding around the center pole holding up the canvas roof of the theater got to pushing and playing around. The first thing we knew, the pole had been knocked down and the whole roof was floating down on us. Then I couldn't even see. I decided it wasn't worth the trouble and went back to my tent. Some day I am going to New York and see the rest of that show.

For some weeks I had been bothered with a pain in my stomach that I felt was not altogether due to the things I had to gripe about. Now that we were settled in Camp Detroit, I felt that this would be as good a time as I would find for some time to let our battalion doctor know about it and to ask him to give me something to remedy the situation. I should have known better than to reveal my troubles to such an inquisitive person. He wanted to know how I slept, what

I ate (as if he didn't know), what my grandmother's first cousin had died of, and a lot of other information that had nothing to do with my stomachache. When he had completed this inquisition that would have put the Spanish to shame, his verdict was that there was nothing he could do for me. But, being a kind and considerate man by nature, he made arrangements for me to go to the nearest general hospital—whether I wanted to or not. And then were his words, pardner: I was trapped and couldn't escape. Just a simple question like "Doc, what can I do for my stomachache?" had gotten me smacked right into a general hospital, from which there was no turning back. I was soon to come to a deeper appreciation of that dismal warning, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." You wouldn't guess it, but those words were written expressly about Army general hospitals. They were the easiest things in the world to get into and the hardest things in the world to get out of—just like riding boots.

Soissons

AS soon as I reached the hospital at Soissons, I was taken to the admitting office. I sat in this office for two hours, waiting for my turn to be examined. I surely was thankful there wasn't anything seriously wrong with me. I think a person could go on and die while waiting to see the doctor in one of these offices. When I finally got inside for my interview with the admitting officer, I discovered that he was a captain whose duty it was to question all the patients as to the nature of their illness and then to send them to the proper department. He acted like a sorting clerk in a post office. I had to tell him my whole story before he could make up his mind where I ought to be sent. After half an hour of my talking and his grunting encouragement he finally decided that I should go to the department that handled the g.i. (gastrointestinal) cases. Thereupon he made out three reams

of orders, recommendations, specifications, directions, and so on—all of which boiled down to this: "You take him, Joe. I don't know what else to do with him."

When I reported to the next officer, I saw that he was a major. That made me feel pretty good. At least they thought I was sick enough to require someone with a little higher rank. Well, I had to tell this joker my story all over again . . . starting from my early childhood and continuing down to that very moment. He nodded and grunted and clicked his tongue and doodled on a scratch pad while I talked. It was very annoying. I couldn't tell if my story was amusing and interesting him or if he was bored and was making all those approving sounds from force of habit. But when I finished the long tale, he rushed out of his office, telling me to stay right there until he got back. In about twenty minutes he came back with a lieutenant colonel. Now, that scared me. It was fun being sick enough to interest a captain, and there was something comforting in the thought that you were sick enough to warrant the services of a major. But when they came around with a lieutenant colonel, that made me fear that I really was sick. If they had come in with a full colonel, I know I would have passed out completely; they might as well have sent the undertaker instead.

The major sat in with us and told the lieutenant colonel all I had told him about my symptoms and the nature of my illness. I felt rather proud of the major because he had remembered so much of what I had told him. When the major got through, the lieutenant colonel turned to me and said that he wanted me to tell him all I could remember about my case. Yes, he wanted me to start at the very beginning. Now, that was a pretty hard assignment. I had to tell the same story that I had told four times previously, but this time I had to tell it in the presence of some one who had heard it before. I knew that if I made a mistake, added something new, or left out something that I had told before, they would probably think I was making up the

whole tale and would put me down as a psycho case. Now, if you think it isn't hard to tell the same story exactly the same way over and over, just try it sometime. I must have gotten through this performance O.K. At any rate, they didn't send for the boys with the strait jacket.

The major and the lieutenant colonel went into a huddle and decided that I must be incarcerated. Of course, they used a different word, but it meant the same thing. I was to be committed as a patient in an Army general hospital, and that was just as final and irrevocable as being sentenced to the guard-house. I was shown to my room (which was shared with seven other officers) and given orders to put on the hospital uniform. My regular uniform was taken away and locked up to make sure I didn't try to break out. Those hospital uniforms were something that should have been out of this world but weren't. Fortunately, for the civilian population, the only place they allow things like that is in an Army hospital. They were called pajamas, but that was an insult. Invariably the coat was made of different material from the pants. It was always big enough for several people. I understand that in emergencies they were often waterproofed and used for truck covers. If anybody ever got a pair of pants to fit him, I never heard of it. Fat men always drew small pants, and small men always drew large pants, and never the twain did meet. When I tied the tie cord around my waist, I always had several yards of pants left over. Once I walked clear around the room and never moved a stitch of thread in my pajamas—they were lying on the bed.

It was decided that I should go on the regular diet given to patients with gastric ulcers. The doctors didn't know what I had, but until they found out they felt that I should take all precautions. So I went on the ulcer diet. And if I had stayed on it long, I would have been off all diets for eternity. This little culinary concoction began with dehydrated eggs and dehydrated milk for breakfast. For lunch I had dehydrated eggs

and some kind of cereal they wrestled up in a peasant's pantry. For supper I had dehydrated eggs and dehydrated potatoes. For three weeks it was the same, day in and day out. By the way, a dehydrated egg looks, tastes, and smells just as you would expect it to if the old hen had laid it just before she ran up the ramp to Noah's private zoo. It may have been nourishing, but it surely wasn't any fun to eat such a dish.

After I had been in the hospital for several days, the doctors sent me word that I was to go to the X ray room for some pictures. The morning I went for this examination, I didn't even get the dehydrated eggs, for which I was thankful. I won't go into all the gory details of that visit, but there is one little gimmick they used on me down there that you ought to know about. The doctor had me strip to the waist and lie on a table as cold as a slab of ice while he squinted at my private insides through the fluoroscope. It was dark in the room and I couldn't see what he was doing, but soon after he began the examination, he started pressing against my stomach with some kind of instrument. The more he looked, the harder he pressed, until it seemed that he would go right through me. You have seen these metal nutcrackers that fasten onto the side of a table and have a top that you screw down to crack the nuts. Well, that was what he was using on me, I knew. He was screwing this thing down tighter and tighter on my stomach. I knew that when he got through I would have a waist that looked like grandmother's when she wore those wasp-waist outfits. I was really chagrined when he got through and I saw that the only instrument he had was a small wooden mallet.

After he had finished this examination, the doctor asked me to wait in the outer office for about ten minutes. He wanted to make some more pictures of me. It turned out that I waited four hours. I didn't get back to my room until three o'clock that afternoon. By that time I was even willing to eat more dehydrated eggs—and that was all I got.

While I was serving my term in the general hospital in Soissons, orders came in for my outfit at Camp Detroit. As you will remember, we had been scheduled to go on to the Pacific. But while I had still been at Camp Detroit, getting ready to sail, news had come in of the first atomic bomb. Soon after this, rumors had begun to fly that Japan would soon surrender and we would not have to go to the Pacific. As events turned out, this was one rumor that proved to be correct. Japan did soon surrender and our orders were changed. The day I left for the hospital, orders came through directing my outfit to return to the States. I'll always regret that I wasn't in camp the day that news arrived. I'm sure there was some real celebrating going on. But word soon reached me in the hospital at Soissons and I was pretty happy about the whole thing. I just hoped that I wouldn't be kept in the hospital until after my outfit left. I had horrible visions of being assigned to some other battalion that had to remain in Europe for occupation duty.

A few days later the ward officer came into my room and said that he had news for me. He had in his hand a clump of X ray pictures and he had on his face a very solemn look.

"It doesn't look so good for you, Chappy," he said.

Can you imagine how I felt? It has become a national joke how low the Army's physical standards were. You have heard all the cracks about how the Army took in men as long as they were still warm, and so on. Then, too, you have heard how men were kept on duty when they had to go on crutches, and how two men sometimes had to be assigned to a third soldier to hold him up while he performed his duty. And you probably have heard those rumors about Patton and his attitude toward disabled soldiers. Well, I knew all that, too. And when this medical officer came in with this long, solemn look on his face and said that things didn't look so good for me, I looked behind him, fully expecting to see the undertaker come in the door any minute. But I had to be brave.

"O.K., Doc," I said staunchly as I stretched out on the bed and folded my hands on my chest so they were just the way I wanted them to be when they laid me away, "I can take it. Don't try to spare me. If my time has come, I'm ready. How long have I got?"

"Not very long, I'm afraid," he answered. "The X rays show that you have an ulcer. As soon as we can arrange for your travel we will have to send you back to the States."

Back to the States! And I had thought he was about to say that they would have to send me out in a pine box. I sat bolt upright in bed. I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. It is a great thrill to learn that your death sentence has been commuted and you are going to be sent back to your family. In my happiness over this news I almost forgot why I was being sent home. After all, I thought to myself, an ulcer is not anything to be going around boasting about. They have the reputation of causing a lot of trouble. So I asked the Doc about this: "Is it very serious?"

"No. Not too bad. If you will take good care of yourself, watch your diet, cut out that moonshine (and me a chaplain—ha!), and otherwise be careful, you can get over it in due time. But we will have to send you home. We can't treat you properly over here."

Well, now, that wasn't so bad. After all, I thought, if I could cure it in a short time with the proper care, why should I worry about a little ulcer? Besides, wasn't this thing getting me home? That ulcer was my ticket back to the States and my family. The more I thought about it, the prouder I got of that ulcer. When I was in the company of other officers in the hospital, I felt very sorry for them. Poor fellows, I reflected, what they wouldn't give to have an ulcer that would send them back home! But, no, they were all well—solid as a rock, sound as a silver dollar, and all that stuff—disgustingly healthy. And as a penalty,

they had to stay in Europe, while my little ulcer took me home.

It didn't take long to get climatized to the idea that I was going home, and right away I started scheming ways and means of hastening my departure. I thought that this new attitude was odd, since I had been so anxious to get overseas in the first place. When the time finally had come for me to go, I had gone with the avowed intention of staying several years. But what had happened? I had been overseas only about six weeks before I had started wishing I was home again. When at last it had been determined that I was to go home, I had been over there just three months. By then I had been good and ready to come back. I'd done my share of kicking old Uncle Sam in the shins, but when I'd gotten away from the old boy's fireplace, I really had begun to miss him and his kind of folks.

It occurred to me that if my battalion was to return to the States in just a few weeks, I might as well return with them. I thought that would get me home pretty quick. One day I sprang this brain child on the ward officer. He laughed at me.

"That wouldn't work at all," he assured me. "You are a hospital patient, remember? Wherever you go, whatever you do from now until the day when you are discharged from the hospital—you will do it through hospital channels. You will be sent from here to the Hospital Distribution Center, where it will be determined if you are to return to the States by air or by boat. According to that decision, you will be sent either to a port or to the Air Evacuation Hospital in Paris. From either of these places you will be sent to a hospital near your home—or at least not more than three thousand miles away. Everything is all set up. You can't get out of channels. Besides, you will get home a lot quicker this way. You'll be sitting pretty in the good old U.S.A. not more than two weeks from today."

Well, if that didn't make me feel like a postage stamp!

You'll be marked and stamped and sent through channels, he said in effect—and woe betide the individualist who tries to kick over the traces!

There wasn't much I could do about getting back to the battalion, so I went over one day and told them the sad news. I wasn't too sad. I had to rub it in a little by assuring them I would be down at the docks to meet them when they came into New York. They could ride over in a smelly old cattle boat, but I was going to fly over in the very best of luxury—with a stewardess, coffee, sandwiches, reclining seats, good company, and all that sort of thing. That made the fellows of the 844th envious of me and they all wanted to know how they could get one—the stewardess, not the ulcer. After I had had my fun, I bade them all a fond farewell and cautioned them against eating sour pickles with their ice cream on the way home—it would give them a lovely shade of green.

I may as well tell you now that all that fun was of short duration. I was the one who got left in Europe. I had all the assurances of the authorities in Soissons that I would certainly be in the States within two weeks. Why, they said, some of their patients were home two days after leaving their hospital. And, foolish boy that I was, I believed these purveyors of optimism. As you will see, I was over a month getting home. My battalion sailed for home before I even left Soissons. Some of the boys were at home or at separation centers before I ever left France. And I was the one who had been bumping my gums about meeting them at the dock!

About ten days after the medics had decided to send me home, and one day before I took on the color and odor of a dehydrated egg from having eaten so many of them, I was informed that I was to leave Soissons that very day. Hastily I packed my toothbrush (which had been given to me by the Red Cross) and made arrangements for some other party to

take over my lease on the hospital. That afternoon I left by ambulance for the Hospital Distribution Center. I spent one night there while the authorities decided whether I was to return to the States by air or by sea. They decided I was to go by air. So the next morning I was taken down and placed on a hospital train headed for—you guessed it, Paris.

Paris Once More

COMING back to Paris was almost like coming back home. I had been there so many times, and had been free to wander over the city so much of the time I was there, that I had become rather familiar with the city and had made some friends among the natives. The people at the Red Cross Clubs had gotten to the point where they could set their clocks by my coming and going. But I have an idea that they were beginning to think I was A.W.O.L. because I was free so much of my time.

On this particular trip to Paris I was associated with the Air Evacuation Hospital, which was located at Orly, about fifteen miles from downtown Paris. It was to this point that I was carried when our hospital train arrived in Paris. At the hospital we were accorded the traditional Army welcome: a long waiting

line. Again I had reason to rejoice that I wasn't ill. I stood in line for four hours, waiting to be received into the hospital and assigned to a bed. The reason for this delay was that this hospital had to make out its own fifteen reams of orders, questionnaires, forms, classifications, and whatnot before we newcomers could be received into the hospital. There is one cardinal rule in Army hospitals: Never accept or believe anything written or said about a patient coming from another hospital. After all, all the other hospitals may be working hand in glove with the enemy. One simply cannot be too careful about the patients one takes into one's hospital. Just because a man comes in with his leg missing, and a set of records from another hospital that verifies the fact that the leg is missing, is no sign that it is true. The most obvious cases can provide the setting for some kind of skulduggery. So examinations, forms, questions, records and anything else the commanding officer and his aides can think up must be set up and completed before a soldier can be admitted with a diagnosis of a missing leg.

When I was at last given the official stamp as being O.K. for admission into the Air Evacuation Hospital, a beaming, smiling, bowing, and kowtowing special service officer began to congratulate me and slap me on the back.

"What a lucky, lucky boy you are," he purred enthusiastically. "You, even you, are to be sent to the United States by air. Can you imagine that?"

I said nothing, so he continued his ranting. "Yes, sir. The Army looks after its own. There is nothing too good for the men who are sick. They will receive first choice and first place."

Such enthusiasm inspired me to ask the seemingly practical question, "When? When will I catch the plane for New York?"

That took the smile off his face. Maybe I wasn't supposed to wonder about such trivial matters. He sputtered for a moment and then said, "Oh, I'm sure you will be gone in not more than

three days. Most of the men leave within two days after coming here. But I am sure you can count on three days as the absolute limit."

I'll bet he is still wondering why I gave him the Bronx cheer. You see, I was beginning to catch on. That joker didn't know any more than I did when I would be sent home. For all he knew, it would be three years. And that is what burned me up. He had the lack of intelligence to pass out this optimistic but wholly unverified promise of an early departure. Luckily, I knew better than to believe him.

When I got to the ward to which I had been assigned, I soon got acquainted with the other officers there. There were twenty of us on that ward, all waiting for air evacuation back to the States. Naturally, I was interested in how long they had been waiting. I didn't have a chance to ask them. One officer, himself a medic, but this time on the receiving end (which was a gratifying thing to see), asked me rather sarcastically, "Well, I suppose they told you your plane would be ready in not more than three days?"

"Yes," I replied, and mocking the officer who had tried to hoodwink me, I went on, "and you just have no idea how thrilled I am."

Everybody laughed. Then some of them made some unprintable remarks about how slowly the men were being evacuated to the States.

I asked the medic, "How long have you been in here?"

"Only eighteen days. But I'm a new recruit. Some of these other men have been waiting for over a month."

I prepared to spend the winter in Paris.

Fifteen days later I was told by the ward nurse that my name would be called the next day for air evacuation. That meant that I actually was getting out before the snow came to Paris. I went to bed that night a mighty happy young man. The next morning I was up bright and early, packing my bags and

getting my things in shape for the trip home. I sang and whistled as I worked, for the world was all gay and lovely to me; I was going home, so what did anything else matter?

When I came back to the ward from breakfast, the nurse told all the patients to pay special attention to an important announcement that would be made about noon. But it didn't bother me. Let them announce any old thing they can think of, I thought; I am going home. They could tear the hospital down, for all I cared. Nevertheless, just after noon I was all ears when the special announcement came out and the nurse read it for us on our ward. This is what she read:

All officers, enlisted personnel, and patients of this hospital are hereby notified that in the very near future the First General Hospital will take over the operation of this unit. Until such transfer is completed all evacuation of patients will cease.

Brother, that straightened out my dimples.

As things turned out, however, it wasn't as bad as it sounded. Only six days after this, the situation had improved so much that I was again slated for evacuation. This time I made it. I actually got on the plane, bag and baggage.

One officer I had met when I had first come to the Air Evacuation Hospital was with me when we went out to board the plane to take us home. Ever since he had found out that he was to be sent back to the States by air, he had been dreading the trip worse than I dread a cold shower. He had never flown before and he told me that he just knew he was going to be sick. To tell the truth, I think he was plain scared. When he got on the plane, he found a seat as quickly as possible and immediately sat down. He was pretty nervous, and pale as flour. It so happened that from where he was sitting it was impossible for him to see the ground. He could look

out the window but couldn't see the ground unless he stood up, and that he was afraid to do. We hadn't been in the plane long before the pilot began to warm up the engines. If you have ever been in an Army plane during that process, you know what we went through then. If you haven't, just imagine what an egg feels like when you apply the beater; that will give you a fairly good idea of how the plane roars, shakes, shimmies, vibrates, and generally dances around while the engines are being warmed up. Well, when all that vibrating started, that poor officer who was so afraid of flying started getting sick. He yelled for the nurse to bring him a cup—and quick! He was airsick, he said . . . couldn't stand the altitude. The nurse brought him the cup; then she asked him to stand up and look out the window—we hadn't left the runway.

Transcontinental travel is an interesting thing. You never can tell just where you are in relation to the passage of time and the usual routine of life. At least, I never could. To show you what I mean: We left Paris at about five o'clock in the afternoon, with our first stop scheduled to take place on an island in the Azores. Somewhere along the route night overtook us, or maybe we overtook night. As I say, I never could tell about those things. At any rate, it was night when we landed in the Azores. As soon as we had been checked in by the authorities there, we were told where we could find the mess hall. It was two o'clock in the morning by their time, so naturally the mess hall was serving breakfast . . . and what a breakfast it was! Now, I have nothing against the way the Army fed us while we were in Europe. I know they did the best they could, even if I did eat dehydrated eggs for two solid weeks. But when I sat down to eat on that island in the Azores, I sat down to a genuine guaranteed-to-please-or-your-money-back American breakfast: fresh eggs, bacon, toast, and milk. What a delight that was! We had an hour waitover on

that island and I spent the whole time eating one breakfast after another.

When we left the Azores, we headed northwest to Newfoundland. Unfortunately, most of this trip was made at night and I was unable to see the ocean. Even when daylight came, there wasn't much to see as we flew above the clouds most of the time. But it was certainly beautiful up there. One simply cannot adequately describe the brilliant blue of the sky above, and the dazzling white of the rolling, tumbling clouds beneath. Occasionally we would pass over great valleys and chasms in the clouds, and sometimes the floors of these deep-walled, snow-white valleys would open and I could see the slate gray of the ocean, with the little wrinkles of waves across it. When you are on a ship on the ocean, the waves are quite clear and distinct. But when you fly over those waves at ten or twelve thousand feet, they look like little wrinkles, or wind rows, in the sand.

As we approached Newfoundland, the pilot of our plane learned that the field where we were supposed to land was fogged in and the base authorities would not allow us to attempt a landing. Instead, they directed us to fly across the island to a second base, on the western side, which was reported clear of fog. That was all right with us, except for one minor detail: The crew of our plane was to have been relieved at the first base. There was no relief crew at the field where we had to land. That meant that we would have to wait there for at least eight hours while our crew got some sleep and rested up a bit—just another of those unavoidable delays that cropped up so often.

As soon as we were safely down on Newfoundland, we were escorted to the mess hall. There we learned that it was eight o'clock in the morning by their time. They too were serving breakfast. The fact that I had already stuffed myself to the gills with breakfasts in the Azores didn't disturb them or

me in the least. I sat down as though I had never seen an egg before, especially one trimmed with bacon, and went after it. It was wonderful, but I couldn't get over the idea that something was wrong. Have you ever done that—eaten two breakfasts in the same day? Or maybe it wasn't the same day . . . I didn't know. All I knew was that I had eaten one breakfast and was now eating another one, with no dinner or supper between. Breaking up your fixed habits like that can get a person all mixed up.

After about ten hours in Newfoundland we started for the good old U.S.A. Our next stop would be Mitchell Field, New York. We landed there at about midnight—their time. By the time we got to the hospital and got checked in, it was two-thirty in the morning. Of course, the personnel there felt that they had to give us something to eat before they put us to bed. We were taken to the mess hall, where we were served a wonderful breakfast. (Well, what did you expect, dinner?) Again we had bacon and eggs. Somehow they didn't look quite so good, but I managed to eat several just to keep from hurting anybody's feelings.

My home was in southern Alabama, so when the time came for me to indicate my choice of hospitals to the authorities in the hospital at Mitchell Field, I told them I would prefer to go to one that was located about two hundred miles from my home. I was tempted to choose one in California; then I would be sure to go to one in Alabama. But I am too much of a conservative, and in spite of all that had happened, I had too much faith in the Army's ultimate wisdom to take such a chance as that. Besides, if I had asked for California, it might have been just my luck to be sent there. It turned out that I had acted wisely, for I was sent to a hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, only four hundred miles from my home. I was pretty elated over this good fortune. Four days later I landed in the hospital in Jackson.

We had been told that when we got back to the States the first thing we would get would be a thirty-day leave. Naturally, that was what all of us were looking for. And I must admit that I probably made myself seem a bit worrisome in the eyes of the hospital authorities by constantly asking them when I was going to be granted my thirty-day leave. The medics at Jackson told me that I would have to go through the usual routine of examinations and record-making before I could go home. So the attack began.

First, I was assailed by a medic whose worthy task it was to get my history. By this time I had accumulated a set of records that looked like the transcript of a Huey Long filibuster. Anyone who was the least bit interested in my case could find out what he needed to know about me and my forbears from the landing of the Mayflower to the present date simply by looking at those records. But, no—the fact that I had a medical history as long as Jimmy Durante's nose didn't faze those medics a bit. They simply ignored it and plunged into the monumental task of making up their own set of records. I had to start from the beginning and tell every little detail. But I had the advantage now. I had recited this tale of woe so many times, I knew it by heart. I sounded like a schoolboy reciting in a singsong voice "The Village Blacksmith." The poor medic who was trying to get my history had a terrible time trying to take it all down as I reeled it off. He must have been impressed with the uselessness of it all, for when I had finished he didn't even ask a question, just said thanks and left. And I had a few more reams of records to add to my growing collection.

Once the records and examinations were all in order, I began the intricate process of trying to get my leave. Filling out the request for orders granting me leave was simple. But before I could pick up my orders I had to clear the post. That meant that I had to get a signed statement from every department in the hospital that I didn't owe them anything and hadn't bor-

rowed a corkscrew from them. I had been in the hospital less than a week and had hardly stepped out of the ward in that time. Nonetheless, I had to get clearance from the library, Post Engineers, mess hall, Quartermaster, M.P.'s, and seventeen other agencies that I had never heard of and that had never heard of me. It was educational. The chances are that I would never have seen many of the places on that base if it hadn't been for my running around with this clearance sheet. I accomplished the job in a day by madly rushing from one place to another. I wondered how the men who were really sick ever got cleared from a hospital. It took a man with pretty good health and a lot of wind and stamina to go through the job of getting clearance.

• 13 •

Home at Last

AS you can see, it took me quite a while to get things arranged at the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, before I could start on my long-desired and eagerly awaited trip home. But at last the ordeal was over and I went to the local bus station to catch the first bus they had for Alabama. I arrived at the bus station at one-thirty in the morning. I was very fortunate, I thought, in that the next bus for Alabama was scheduled to leave at two o'clock. It left at four and I was on it.

We got to Montgomery at one o'clock in the afternoon. I had been up all night and had been fighting for footing on the bus for the past twelve hours. I don't think I was being selfish about that place to stand. I didn't ask anyone for a seat. All I wanted was a place to stand. But on that crowded, jostling bus I would have lost even that, and would have been

pushed right off the bus by some exiting passenger, if I had not fought valiantly for footing. This campaign left me not a little weary and worn. It is not hard to understand, therefore, that when I arrived in Montgomery I was in no mood for misfortune. But that is what I got. I had been told, when I had started this pilgrimage of penance, that a bus would leave Montgomery for Andalusia, Alabama (my home and destination), at two P.M. When I got off the bus at Montgomery, I made it as fast as I could to the first sitting-down place I saw. I didn't bother to check to see if the bus to Andalusia was running on time. I was so tired and anxious to sit down that my brain wouldn't work. I flopped into a chair and dozed. I roused up at ten minutes of two and started scrambling around for my bags. All of a sudden that joker on the loud-speaker began snarling, "The two P.M. bus for Andalusia will run at four P.M. . . . maybe." The whole transportation system was working against me. I would never get home at this rate. I was losing time everywhere. But, you know, the human body and mind are wonderful gadgets (I never go without mine). They will worry and fret and fume and go along with you just as much as you like—up to a certain point. But when they get tired of monkey business, they compare notes and agree to call the whole thing off. That is what happened to me. Ordinarily, you would expect a fellow to get pretty sore about all these delays. Ever since I had been told back in Soissons, France, so many months before, that I was coming home, I had encountered one delay after another. Now I was only ninety miles from home, but still the delays kept occurring. This time, though, my mind refused to play along any more. So I went to sleep again.

Four o'clock came and the bus actually ran at that time. By seven o'clock that night I was getting off the bus in front of my home. And running out of the house, mid joyous shouts and laughter, was the sweetest little woman in the world: my wife. I was home.

Getting back home was one of the grandest experiences I ever had. Seeing my wife and baby again, to say nothing of my other relatives, was a joy that I shall not soon forget. Then, too, there was a little of the joy of the "conquering hero" mixed with it all.

Before I had come back to the States, I had been given the E.T.O. ribbon. This ribbon, pinned up with one or two others that I had picked up at odd places, made an impressive "fruit salad" on my heroic little chest. Now, I had always thought that I was a pretty honest sort of fellow. I mean by that that I had never believed I was one for putting on the dog and pretending to be something that I knew I wasn't. Some people relish that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, that is what keeps the corset business thriving. But I had just never been one to go in for that sort of thing. Nevertheless, I must admit that it now gave me no little pride to walk down the streets of my home town with my overseas patches and ribbons prominently displayed on my uniform. When I was talking with an old friend, I would almost unconsciously stick out my chest, and would feel a little offended if he didn't notice my ribbons.

Now, the truth of the matter is that I was always scared to death that someone was going to start asking questions about my overseas duty. I knew that whenever I let the conversation dwell too long on that subject, someone was bound to ask, "And how long were you over?" That was always embarrassing. What a gallant reply I had to make! "Why, I was over three months." How do you suppose that sounded when I was talking to some man whose son had been over three years and was still over? And how do you suppose I felt when they looked at me as if I had just said, "Why, my name is Benedict Arnold, pal. What's yours, Quisling?"

Sometimes the torture didn't end there. These so-called friends of mine would often press on with relentless determination until I was shorn of the last thread of heroism. They

would come back with: "Did you see any action?" while they eyed my ribbons suspiciously. Imagine my chagrin when I had to answer weakly, "No, I didn't get across until the fighting was all over. The only action I saw was a tour of Europe, from England to Germany by way of Paris several times. The only time I heard a shot fired was when some of the boys negligently threw some cartridges in a fire at which I was warming myself." That would be about all I could stand. I would sneak home and hide behind the cookstove until it was safe to come out. After a day like that it would take all my wife could do to get my morale back on an even keel.

Still, all in all I had a very good time on my thirty-day-leave from the hospital. After relaxing about a week (now, don't get smart and ask: "Relaxing from what?") the wife and I took a trip to Atlanta to see some friends. Then we drove down to Daytona Beach, Florida, for a few days with my wife's parents. It was all fun, and since the relatives and close friends already knew of my "hazardous overseas duty," I could let my hair down and talk with them the way I am talking with you now.

But the good things had to come to an end, and they did so with speed. The leave was over and I headed back to Jackson, Mississippi, to resume my residence in the hospital. Then the fun started all over again. I had no sooner unpacked my bags and stretched out on my bed when the news burst like an atomic bomb. The hospital was closing up! No more patients would be processed. (*Processed* is not a canning term. It is purely Army, meaning the method by which we got out of the hospital once we got in.) Slowly the full implications of that announcement sank in. All the patients would be transferred to other hospitals in the United States or its possessions. For me it meant that my campaign to get out of the hospital for good had to wait until I was admitted to some other hospital. Where would that be? No one knew. When would I be

sent there? No one knew. When would we know when we would be sent there? No one knew. And that, my friends, is why we invented the term SNAFU.

I waited for three weeks for information to come through that would give me some indication as to where I would be sent and when I would be sent there. I was getting only routine treatment for my case. I spent most of my time in the manual-training shop, making toys for my two-year-old girl. The shop was well equipped with tools and materials and I enjoyed myself turning out dolls, wagons, and toys of all kinds. Thanksgiving was coming soon, so I decided to get a three-day pass to be at home with my family. This turned out to be much easier to accomplish than I had expected it to be. The hospital authorities were most co-operative. As a matter of fact, they even seemed glad to have me go away for a while. I will refrain from giving you a reason for their apparent joy to have me go home. I will trust your good judgment to assume that their delight in seeing me go was in no way a reflection on my behavior as a patient.

I left the hospital on a three-day pass on November 20. Thanksgiving in Alabama was to be on the twenty-second. I had my car with me at the hospital now, so that much time would allow me to be at home with my family through Thanksgiving Day. Needless to say, the folks at home were glad to see me again, though I did have a little trouble convincing my wife that I wasn't A.W.O.L.

I haven't let you in on this little secret before, but my wife was expecting a little brother for our two-year-old girl some time around the first of December. Just after we had finished eating our Thanksgiving dinner, the wife decided that she had better lie down for a while. My father and I had made plans to go quail hunting, so I went in by the fire and started getting dressed for this bird hunt. I was just pulling on my boots when my wife called for me to come to her. When I came into her

room, she said, "Maybe you had better take me to the hospital before you go hunting. I think Junior is coming."

I hated to do it, but I decided to give up the hunting trip. I'm sorry now that I did, for it turned out that I would have had ample time for both the hunt and the baby. I rushed around and got the wife to the hospital at two-thirty that afternoon. She told me to sit down in the hall; when the nurses were ready to take her into the delivery room, she said, she would send for me. Twenty minutes later the nurse came out and said, "You have another girl!"

Now, wasn't that just my luck? The baby had come so quickly that I hadn't had a chance to get nervous. I didn't get to pace one worried pace. I will always feel that I am a poor father because I was so calm and quiet at the baby's birth.

That night I called the hospital at Jackson and told them what had happened. I told them I was needed pretty badly at home just then and asked for an extension of my three-day pass. The authorities at the hospital said that would be all right and instructed me to remain right where I was until they sent my orders to me. That was a mighty decent thing for them to do. I hadn't asked for any special length of time but was reasonably sure that they would give me at least two weeks. My surprise knew no bounds when, three days later, I got a telegram from the hospital saying that I was being transferred to Oliver General Hospital, Augusta, Georgia, and that I should proceed to that place after a forty-five-day leave at home! I've forgiven the Army many a dirty deal for that one generous and kindly act at a time when I sorely needed it.

The rest of this chapter is for men only. The following observations are so commonplace to women as to be dull. But for us men it is a different story. So you women stop reading right now and turn this book over to Pappy. It will strike a responsive note in his heart, I know.

Men and fathers, have you ever found yourself in this predicament: your wife sick in bed, leaving you the care of two babies, one two years old, the other two weeks old? If you have, all I can say is "Welcome, Comrade. You are entitled to the highest order of fatherhood: two safety pins in your pants."

My day began at six o'clock in the evening, when the baby was yelling for her four o'clock bottle. After that chore was ended, the rest of the family had supper—which reminds me of the other meals we had. Those were the worst meals I ever ate in my life. For breakfast we had scrambled eggs. For dinner we had soup—canned soup. For supper we had what was left over from dinner and breakfast. If it hadn't been for the fact that I was preparing the meals myself, I would have registered a complaint. Those meals did much more than the doctor's care to get my wife out of bed. She had to get up or continue suffering from my cooking.

But as I was saying before I interrupted myself, after I had fed the baby, we ate supper. That usually took an hour or two because of the two-year-old girl, Barbara. Mealtime for a two-year-old who is just learning to use a spoon is an experience in itself. A child like that seems to think that a spoon is an instrument to be used to flip food around the room. For some reason known only to two-year-olds, a blob of eggs on the wall appeals to them. To them it is perfectly proper and in keeping with the best etiquette to smear oatmeal in your hair. And this little girl of mine kept trying to prove to herself that she could drink milk by putting the upper lip of the cup in her mouth, instead of the lower lip, as other people do. As a result of this experiment she was sitting in a pond of milk before the meal was well begun.

Somehow I got myself and Barbara fed. Then came bath time. That was when I washed the food she should have eaten out of her hair, ears and eyes, and from between her toes.

It was the time, also, when most of the water in the tub was transferred in small amounts to the bathroom floor, from which I had to mop it up. The bath went along all right until I came to the part where I was supposed to wash Barbara's face. That started the lung exercises. I knew the neighbors must have thought I was applying thumbscrews to her, from the blood-curdling yells she emitted when I washed her face and ears.

The bath over, I dressed the two-year-old and put her to bed, and returned to the kitchen to wash the dishes that had piled up during the day. I was pretty old-maidish about my kitchen. I didn't care how messed up it got during the day, but when I stumbled in there in the morning, with sleep still clutching at my eyes, I wanted a clean kitchen. So the dishes had to be washed, the food put away, the floor swept, the garbage taken out, and a dozen other things looked after.

When all this was over, I sat down to read the previous morning's newspaper. But just as the chair started feeling good, a yell from the two-weeks-old baby brought me into the fight again. It was time for her ten o'clock feeding, which she should have gotten at eight o'clock. And she needed to be dried too. In getting the bottle ready I made so much noise I woke up Barbara who had been bedded down for the night. It took two or three *Uncle Remus* stories to get her back to sleep.

Finally all was quiet on the home front, and I returned to my paper. Just then the good wife suggested that I had better wash the diapers and other assorted clothing that had accumulated during the day, so I could hang them out early in the morning—I wouldn't have time the next morning, she reminded me. By the time this was done, it was midnight. I went to bed. But don't relax—I didn't. "Going to bed" simply meant going to another place from which to get up to tend to one or the other of our babies. At two o'clock there was another bottle. There was still another one at six in the morn-

ing, and Barbara woke up while I was fixing this bottle. There was no sleep after that. And I plunged into the fray again. All day long it was diapers, bottles, bathing, meals, squalling babies, ironing, cleaning house, sweeping, and a thousand other things that the uninitiated wouldn't understand about.

One of the more important functions involved in carrying on a home life, which we men are inclined to overlook, except at bill-paying time, is the daily visit to the local grocery store. Little as we men may think about them, the foods we find on our tables at mealtime do not originate in the ice-box hydrator or in the deep freeze unit. These are merely intermediate storage points between the grocery store and the table. I am telling you men this for your own edification. This is the voice of authority. Draw near and give an ear, young man, and I will tell you more about the mysteries of the housewife's routine.

The day after my wife got out of bed and was able to move around the house again, our can opener disappeared. I have not to this day wrung a confession from her, but I retain a lurking suspicion that she threw the can opener away. I can't give a motive for this, however, and that is all that keeps me from making an outright accusation. After all, we had been living out of cans for only two weeks, so she could not have had any motive for throwing away the can opener. Anyway, it disappeared and thus brought to a head a crisis I had been laboring to avoid.

Faced thus with starvation, I could sidestep the issue no longer. I was forced to go to the grocery store. However, I do not wish to describe myself as a hero. I will agree with you that the decision was one which required courage. After all, it isn't every man who will take it upon himself to invade woman's domain by going out on a spree of grocery buying. But I would have you understand that I did not take this bold step unassisted. The empty pantry shelves, two crying

babies, and my wife's pitifully imploring question, "Will you sit here and see our children starve?" had a great deal to do with my going.

The night before I was to go on this campaign the wife and I sat up late, taking inventory of our dwindled stock and making a list of things we needed to get our housekeeping back to the minimum standards required by civilization. As the night wore on and the list I was compiling grew longer and longer, my resistance broke down. Before I knew what had happened, I had agreed to go into that horror of horrors (for males), the dime store. That nearly proved to be my undoing.

Early next morning I started out on the expedition. My first stop was the dime store, as my wife felt that I should tackle that while my resistance was still good. William James, the great American philosopher, once said that if men were ever to cease warring with one another they would have to find a moral equivalent of war. I think he meant that we would have to find some activity that would satisfy the primitive instincts for conquest, domination, and possession; something that had the daring and adventure of war; something that allowed for a somewhat reckless flippancy in regard to personal safety. It is a deep tragedy that Dr. James died before the advent of the modern dime store. If we but had the gumption to capitalize on it, we would find here in the unassuming guise of a dime store the moral equivalent of war. If you question this, I challenge you to enter, unassisted by a policeman, the nearest dime store just after it has advertised hairless brushes for sale. That is the situation in which I found myself.

I was inside the store and trying to get close enough to a counter to buy a spool of thread and some pink rickrack, when I heard a slight commotion and looked up just in time to see, coming down the aisle toward me, what you might call a woman—but I wouldn't. She was the ugliest creature I had ever seen. At first I thought she had forgotten to take off her

Halloween mask, but then I saw that the nose was real. She came right on, charging down the aisle without a glance to the right or to the left. People to the right of her, people to the left of her, people to the rear of her—all were knocked flat by this steam roller in woman's dress. I quickly ducked under a counter and escaped serious injury. But when I came out, the battle was on again in full force. I was the only one who seemed to pay much attention to that truck that had just passed through. Apparently it was all part of the game.

After I had escaped with only minor injuries from the dime store, I went over to the grocery store to complete my shopping tour. My wife had instructed me to go to one of those supermarkets, as she had thought I would be able to find all I had to buy in that one store. I had agreed that it would be easier for me to get all the groceries at one store than if I had to run from one side of town to the other, buying eggs at one store, butter at another, and baby foods somewhere else. In my naïve way I had assumed that if I had all the groceries cornered within the four walls of one store, their location and purchase would be a simple matter. When I walked into that store, which covered half a city block, I saw what a Herculean task I had undertaken.

There is an old riddle that goes like this: If you were told that there was a baseball somewhere on a ball field, and you were sent out there at midnight without a light to find it, how would you begin? I knew the answer to that. You would start in the center of the ball field, and going in slowly widening circles, search for the ball. I rejoiced that I knew that answer when I started looking for groceries in the supermarket. There it was before me: row after row, counter after counter, stack after stack of groceries. And I was to find a can of English peas, small, and of a certain brand. That was the first item on my list. So I went to the center of the store and started the old baseball routine.

Around and around, up and down, over and under shelves,

counters, and stacks of groceries, I fought my way. It took about twenty minutes, but at last my searching eyes were rewarded: There were the English peas—on a shelf right by the door by which I had entered the store. Well, one down and only forty more to go. So back to the center of the store I went for another start. This time I was looking for peaches. I knew the avenues and short cuts a little better this time, so I made the trip in only fifteen minutes—and found the peaches on a shelf right next to where I had found the English peas. I was sure that was just an accident.

Now I had to find corn . . . canned corn. I started the routine again. This time the object of my search was located on a shelf right above the English peas. I almost got mad. It looked as if my system weren't so good. I had been searching for nearly an hour and had located only three items. And they had all been right together. If everything was going to be in that corner, I might as well start there, I decided.

The next item was baby food—every kind imaginable. This time I gave up the baseball routine and started looking where I was. But, look as I would, no baby foods could be found. By the way, American babies really get their meals in compact packages. The people who put those foods on the market believe in giving the baby a complete meal in one bottle. And they get such ghastly combinations! For instance, how would you like to sit down to a little appetizer marked LIVER SOUP, TOMATOES, RICE PUDDING, AND STRING BEANS?

After thirty minutes of searching for the baby foods, I gave up. The store manager had outsmarted me. He and his cohorts in crime, the clerks, had hidden the baby foods where even Sherlock Holmes couldn't find them. Confessing my failure, I took out a white flag and waved it as a signal of my abject surrender. One of the clerks ran to me to receive my terms of capitulation.

I said to him, "Listen, bub, you see this list of groceries

long enough to feed Sherman's army on its way through Georgia? Well, if you want to sell that bill of goods, you had better take over right here. You locate the hidden treasure. I'll follow along with this pushcart and collect the swag."

And that is the way we went around and around the store. The clerk located the stuff, and I snatched cans and boxes and bags off the shelves like a cotton picker gone berserk. In no time at all my pushcart was loaded to the hilt and I was doing a victory polka on my way to the cashier.

When I got home, I stepped right into the middle of a revived Spanish Inquisition. Instead of meeting me with outstretched arms and wild rejoicing that I had come back from the grocery store unharmed and victorious, the good wife met me with a barrage of questions: "What did you pay for the peas? . . . How much did the turnips cost? . . . Surely, you didn't have to pay for these ragged radishes?" And so it went with every item. But the worst thing was that I didn't know the price of a single item. What a mess I had made of my shopping spree!

All right, ladies, you can quit reading now. I told you this chapter was for Pappy.

Back to the Hospital

AFTER about forty days of my leave had passed, I was ready to wire the War Department and request that they cancel the rest of my leave and order me back to the hospital. Forty days of cooking, washing diapers, feeding babies, keeping house, and doing the family shopping had just about done me in. I was needing some rest, so I began looking forward to my return to the hospital as though it were going to be a vacation. Now, don't get me wrong. I am not insinuating that my stay at home was not pleasant. It was. I love my wife and babies. I just needed a little rest, that was all. And I knew that after I had been at the hospital for a few weeks, I would be more than ready to return to the battle on the home front.

Even though I did contemplate sending that wire to the War Department, I refrained from taking such a drastic step. I feared that if I should make such a request, they would

meet me with an ambulance and a strait jacket when I arrived at the hospital. So I patiently sweated out the last few days of my leave.

As I said before, this time I was to report to Oliver General Hospital in Augusta, Georgia. I presumed that my records would have been sent from the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi, in the meantime, so that the medics at Oliver General would be ready to go to work on my case just as soon as I arrived. It had been forty-five days since I had been a patient in Jackson, and I thought that was ample time for even the Army to get records transferred. But when I arrived at Oliver General on the fifth of January, 1946, I discovered that not a page of my records had been forwarded to that institution. I knew what that would mean. Sure enough, after I had been there for five days, doing nothing but eating, sleeping, and going to the movies and the Red Cross Room, a doctor happened to wander into my room. I was sure this was an accident. If that doctor had known there was a patient in the room, he would never have come in. That was almost a violation of military law. Since he was trapped, and seeing nothing better to do, he pulled out his notebook and pencil and asked me to give him my case history. This was my eighth recital, so I went through it without a hitch—no need for coaching from the side lines.

The young doctor was somewhat pleased with himself for his accomplishment of acquiring my case history. So when he had finished, he rushed down to his office and turned in his notes to his secretary, with instructions for her to type the records and seven carbon copies; then, being satisfied that he had materially contributed to the winning of the war, he rushed out to play a game of golf. Thus, another batch of records was added to my growing collection.

Oliver General Hospital was located in a luxurious hotel

on the outskirts of Augusta, Georgia. The main attractions of this hotel were an eighteen-hole golf course and a swimming pool. In the years before this establishment had fallen prisoner to the Army and been ruthlessly converted into a hospital (a good-sized chunk of tax revenue going to the owners), it had been the meeting place of some of the nation's leading golf experts. Men of such prominence as Bobby Jones had often been seen beating golf balls around the woods. And I understand that they had gladly forked over as much as thirty dollars a day for their board.

I never had played a game of golf in my life when I came to this luxury resort called a hospital. When I learned that patients in the hospital were not only allowed, but were actually encouraged, to play on this famous course, I resolved to learn the game before I left the hospital. The special-service officer of the hospital was anxious for as many of us as could do so to get out on the course and knock the little pill through the woods. I understood later that his eagerness to have us amateurs play golf was not prompted altogether by his desire to see us have fun in the sun. The undergrowth in the rough had gotten out of control and had made the rough a little too rough. As a matter of fact, unless one had a guide he could easily get lost in the woods and thickets flanking the golf course. The special-service officer knew that if he could get a number of men with golfing ability equal to mine to play for a few days, they would soon cut down and knock down the excessive undergrowth.

The keepers of the course furnished the patient-players with old beat-up and bent-up clubs, sold us dead and cut-up balls for twenty-five cents each, and turned us loose on the course. The place where we all started—"teed off" is the correct term, I believe—looked like a shell-pocked battlefield. At one time it had been nice and level and covered with grass, but now all the grass was scattered to the four winds. There

were places where several of us had started from the same spot. At these places deep holes had been dug in the ground, so that one almost needed steps to get down to a place where he could hit the ball. That was an ominous start. I started the game in one of these obstacles called a "trap," and continued that way for the remainder of the game.

The first day I went out to play, I was issued half a dozen cracked, chipped, bent, and broken clubs, and three balls that looked as if a freight train had run over them. I walked over to the place to start, stuck my tee in the ground, and balanced a ball on top of it. I knew enough to pick the right club to hit it with, and I knew that the general idea was to slap the ball as far down the fairway as possible. A little flag on a hill about four hundred yards away was my objective. I nonchalantly drew my driver back and made a few false swings at the ball, just the way I had seen experts do it in the movies. I suppose that was to frighten the ball, or maybe it was a stall for time to get your nerves ready. Anyway, after a couple of these swings I stepped up to the ball, drew back my club, and walloped the ball for all I was worth. When the half ton of dirt, twigs, assorted weeds, and grass roots settled down I found the ball still sitting on the tee—I'd never touched it. Oh well, I said, that was just clearing the ground around the ball. Now to hit it. I let fly again. This time I heard the driver connect with the ball, and knew I had hit the ball. When the debris settled I saw the ball still rolling—exactly fifteen yards from the tee.

Well, I was started, anyway. And I was still on the fairway. That was something to be proud of. And I hadn't lost a ball yet. I was pretty proud of myself—only two strokes against me and only three hundred and eighty-five yards to go to the first hole. At that rate I thought I would be able to sink the ball in the hole with a minimum of fifty strokes; that is, if I could hold the fast pace which I had set. Not bad for a beginner.

The further I went down fairway number one, the better I became as a golfer. I improved so rapidly that I was able to sink the ball in the first cup with the amazingly low score of twenty-one. I was fairly walking on air with pride when I set my ball up on the number two tee. But bad luck dogged my trail. When I hit the ball on the tee-off, I just clipped the top of it with the driver. The ball went rolling and bouncing off to one side of the fairway, coming to a stop about fifty yards from where I had hit it. When I got to the ball, I discovered there was a very large and tall pine tree directly between me and where I wanted to go with the ball. I knew that I would never be able to knock the ball around the tree. It was quite evident that I couldn't knock the ball through the tree. What to do? After all, I reasoned to myself, I'm just a beginner. Surely, the rules of the game allow some leniency to novices. If they don't, they ought to . . . So I took matters in my own hands and made up my own rule, to wit: If your golf ball gets behind a pine tree something has to move; obviously, it won't be the tree. I leave the rest up to you. But since I was moving the ball, I decided that I might as well move it to a good position. I moved out to the middle of the fairway. From this vantage point there was nothing in my way. I placed the ball, took my rusty driver, and walloped it again. This time I really connected. The ball took off as if it were on a nonstop flight to the moon. The only trouble was that when it got about a hundred feet high, it curved sharply off to the left and went for that pine the way a pin travels to a magnet. It smacked into solid wood high in the pine and bounced out, going clear across the fairway into the woods on the other side. I heard it hit in the leaves and trash, but I never saw that ball again.

Now, you see, that is why they have rules for the game of golf. It will get you nothing but trouble if you try to break the rules. That little golf ball of mine had been knocked around various courses for the past ten years and it had gotten to know

all the rules of the game. It had known that I shouldn't have moved it from behind that pine tree. By all the rights and privileges that accrue to a golf ball, it had had a right to smack into that pine tree. The mere fact that I had moved the ball wasn't going to change that right. The first chance it had gotten, it had gone right where it had been supposed to go all along: into the pine. And that had been the end of that ball. Rather than play along with me in my game of cheating, that little golf ball had committed suicide. It was a sobering lesson for me.

There was nothing left for me to do but take out the second of my three balls and try again. The one I had just lost was the best one I had had. The second one was in pretty bad shape. It had been retired from active duty for twenty years or more, but the emergency created by a lot of patients' wanting to play golf had called it back into service. It looked rather decrepit, as though it couldn't stand much banging around. I set it down and kicked it lightly just to see what it could stand. It rolled away briskly for about ten yards. I decided it would be O.K. So the next time I hit it, I put all I had into the swing of the club. Away the ball went in beautiful style. But when it got about fifty yards away from me, a strange thing happened. Instead of one ball, I saw two balls rolling along, one of them staggering off at a crazy tangent, and the other one going straight ahead. When I got to where the first ball lay, I discovered that it was nothing more than the outside shell of the golf ball. I had literally knocked the hide off that ball.

Only one ball left out of three and I hadn't made the second hole! I was getting a little discouraged by this time and decided I would wait for another day to finish the game of golf. I would be in the hospital for a long time. There was no need to rush matters. One hole a day would be fast enough for me. So I went back to the hospital. I would wait for another day to finish that game of golf. I'm still waiting.

When trouble or hard times were being passed out in the Army, I was always Johnny-on-the-spot, holding out my hat with both hands so I would get a double helping. But when they started to pass out the good things and the lucky breaks, somehow I managed to be in other parts. If I did happen to get in on one of the good things, a law or something was passed that took it all back before I had a chance to enjoy it much.

For instance, the day after I arrived at Oliver General Hospital I heard that the Augusta Arsenal, located just a few miles from the hospital, was selling brand-new shotguns to officers stationed thereabouts. Guns of the very best makes and models, which would have cost no less than seventy-five dollars in a civilian store, were selling at the arsenal for twenty-eight dollars and a few cents. Being the avid bird hunter that I am, I wanted one of those guns so badly that I would have traded my wife for one if I had found anybody willing to make the trade. When I looked into the sale of these shotguns I learned that they were sold only on Tuesdays. I planned to go over the next Tuesday and buy one. But it so happened that the medics were doing a little planning for me too. And they arranged things so that I would be busy with examinations and tests all day that Tuesday. I would have to wait until the Tuesday after that to get my shotgun.

But what should happen? Some wise guy of a columnist in Washington had to go and louse up the whole deal. Somebody wrote him that a bunch of generals and admirals and whatnot from down Pensacola way had been flying up to Augusta in government planes, on government time, buying these government shotguns with government money, and then selling them for good old civilian "moolah." To this columnist, that was too much government and too little civilian business, so he flung off a tirade about it in his column. When that hit the press, the War Department hit the ceiling because somebody (probably a snoopy corporal) had let the cat out of the bag. The

Augusta Arsenal was ordered to stop selling shotguns as of two months previously. And some general is probably shooting my gun right now.

While I was in the dumps over this, cheering news came. The Post Exchange put up a large sign saying that they would soon offer for sale a large quantity of shotgun shells. If I couldn't get a gun, at least I could get the shells, I thought; maybe I could borrow a gun. Now, I want to impress upon you the fact that the Post Exchange advertised the sale of these shells for several days, making it quite clear to any person of average intelligence that they intended passing out shotgun shells to customers.

When the day for the sale came I was on hand, with every other patient in the hospital, to get my shells. Each customer was allowed seven boxes of shells. I carried mine back to my room and put them in my suitcase. Then the fun started.

The local constabulary, known as the Military Police, galvanized every available man into action. Apparently they had ignored the Post Exchange's advertisement of the sale of shotgun shells. Or maybe they thought it was all a joke. Or maybe they just didn't think. Anyway, they suddenly conceived the bright idea that the patients shouldn't have the shells. Orders were sent to all parts of the hospital that all patients must return to their rooms immediately and remain there until they were told they could leave. The whole hospital was placed under military law. M.P.'s were seen everywhere, patrolling the streets, the corridors, the wards. We patients thought some top-ranking international spy was loose on the grounds—either that or that the commanding officer of the hospital had lost his golf ball and all the patients had to help look for it. We hastened to our rooms, where we sat tense and fearful, each of us privately wondering if his roommate could be Hitler in disguise. The suspense was awful.

At last there came a sharp, authoritative rap at our door

and a Military Police officer, followed by two enlisted men, came into our room. This is it, I thought.

The officer looked me over carefully and then asked in one of those third-degree voices, "Did you buy any shotgun shells today?"

I gulped, "Yes, sir."

"Where are they? Where have you got them hidden? Where is your shotgun? What are you planning to do, kill all the patients in the hospital?"

I pointed to the closet where my suitcase was. "In there. I don't have a gun. No, sir."

"'No sir'? 'No, sir' what?"

"No, sir, I wasn't going to kill anybody."

"Well," the officer replied as if he still didn't trust me, "we will take the shells. Henceforth, don't buy any."

And there went my shells. As far as hunting was concerned I was right back where I had started—no gun, no shells.

The Battle Ends

AFTER I had been at Oliver General Hospital for one month, the time came for me to appear before the Army Retirement Board. This was the board of officers who were to determine whether I was to be released from the Army or discharged from the hospital and sent back to active duty. For the past six months I had been going through the regular channels to get before this board. Ever since I had been declared a Zone of Interior patient back in Soissons, France, I had been making my way slowly to this decisive moment. This would be the culmination of my long struggle for freedom; either I would be discharged or I would be retained by the Army. In either case I would win my freedom from the clutches of the general hospitals.

During the course of my detention in the hospital I had talked with other officer-patients who had appeared before this

Retirement Board. They had thrilled me with their tales of the rich rewards that were handed out by the board. I was particularly interested in what happened to those officers who, like myself, had ulcers. You can imagine my delight when I heard them say that the board had given them a clean bill of retirement from the Army, plus retirement pay of three quarters of their base pay for the rest of their natural or unnatural lives. I toyed with the fond hope of receiving a like sentence. What a wonderful thing it would be to retire from the Army with the assurance of a hundred and fifty dollars a month for the rest of my life!

The hospital commander appointed two medical officers to plead my case before the board. One of these officers was a specialist in ulcers; the other was my ward officer. Several days before the time I was to appear before the board, the ulcer specialist had me come to his office for a consultation. We went over all my records together, carefully checking each detail and selecting the most pertinent facts to be used in our argument to the board that I was in terrible physical condition. This procedure gave me a rather guilty feeling. There I was, trying to prove that I was a bad insurance risk, when all the time I never felt better in my life. I felt that I was in perfect physical condition and told this officer so. He hastily assured me that if I as much as hinted at that fact before the board I could just plan to spend the rest of my natural life in the hospital. He informed me that if I were to pass the rigid tests of the board, I would have to plead illness in the first degree. It was very much like a criminal's trying to beat the rap by pleading insanity when everybody knows he isn't insane, only a little nuts for saying he is crazy. Under this threat of life imprisonment, I consented to following the doctor's advice. So we drew up our plan of attack and agreed on just what I was to say when the board started asking me questions.

The procedure before the Army Retirement Board was one

in which the medical officer (witness, in this case) presented the patient's case to the board, and then the board members asked the patient whatever questions they could think of. Under this arrangement the board acted as prosecution, judge, and jury. The patient was the witness and defendant, while the medical officer was the defense attorney.

Before the interview was ended, the ulcer specialist warned me that under no circumstances should I try to alter any of the testimony that had been given, or indicate to the board that I thought I should be released from the Army. This seemed a rather odd piece of advice. "After all," I said, "isn't that the whole purpose of our case?"

"Even so," the ulcer specialist countered, "you leave it up to the board to determine if you should be retired or not. Don't try to tell them that you think you are physically unfit for further military service. They don't like patients to tell them what they ought to do with patients."

Three or four days later I found myself sitting before the retirement board. My medical defense attorney presented my case, using such lengthy medical terms that I began to think that maybe I was much worse off than I had thought. I couldn't understand a word he was saying. But I took comfort in the knowledge that neither could the members of the retirement board. Not one of them was a medical officer. Some of them were cavalry officers, some were infantry officers, some were Quartermaster Corps officers, and one was a veterinarian, which didn't make me any too happy.

When my medical defense attorney finished his description of the frailties of my flesh, the chairman of the board asked me if there was anything I would like to add. I said, "No". Then the questioning began. Right off, one of the board members asked me if I thought I could carry on in the Army. This was the very thing that I had been warned about. I wanted to tell him no, but I was afraid to. And I knew that I didn't want

to tell him yes. I took the middle road by telling him that I had spent nine months of my three years in the Army in hospitals—was that good? I asked.

When the questioning ended I was excused from the room while the members of the board compared notes and decided my fate. After about ten minutes, during which time I think they played a hand of gin rummy, I was called back before the board. The chairman of the board handed me a mimeographed letter, saying that this was their verdict, which I could read later. I saluted the board and departed from their august presence.

Outside the board room I read the letter. My sentence was that I was to be retired from the Army . . . without pay.

During the writing of this story of my life in the Army, I confess that I at times have been sarcastic toward Army brass hats and the insane rules and regulations they often passed down the chains of command. I confess also that I have consistently poked fun at the Army itself, at all its levels. That has been my purpose. But I wish to make clear in this final chapter that I have not told the whole story.

Many fine and wonderful experiences came to me during my three years as a chaplain, experiences I could never have gained in any other work. And I would not exchange ten years of civilian life for those three Army years that were so packed with excitement, pleasures, hard work, and intimate contact with the bare fundamentals of life. It was for these reasons that I left the Army with deep regrets.

I must confess that when the Army Retirement Board handed down the decision that I was to be retired from the Army and placed on inactive status, I was happy. But my gladness did not spring from any dislike of the Army. The war was over and the Army was rapidly returning to a peacetime status.

As far as I had been able to see before I had appeared before the board, the urgent need for chaplains was over. The work that I would be called upon to do if I remained on active duty, I had realized, would closely parallel that of a civilian minister, but it would be on a much less challenging level. Because of my physical condition I could not be sent overseas and would be assigned to a permanent base here in the States. . . . Frankly, the prospect of that kind of life had not appealed to me. I had believed that I could be of much more service to my church, my country, and my family by returning to the civilian ministry. It was for this reason that I received my release from the Army with such joy.

A few days after I had passed the retirement board, I was notified to appear at the Army Discharge Center. Several other officers also reported. We were told how to act when we got back to civilian life. This was a reversal of the process we had gone through when we had come into the Army. Then we had been told all the secrets and mysteries of military life: whom to salute, and why; how to wear the uniform; how to apply for a leave; and how to make friends and influence commanding officers. Now we were being told the strange secrets of civilian life.

We were duly warned that a person had to work for a living as a civilian; that there was no great organization to provide food and shelter and clothing; that there would be no one (unless we were married) to tell us what to do, where to go, and when to get up, eat, and go to bed. We were being cast from under the protective wing of the Army and would have to find some way of shifting for ourselves. I was rather unimpressed by these warnings of the difficulties of civilian life. I was just cocky enough to believe I could take care of myself.

On February 9, I completed all the details pertaining to the termination of my military career and drove over to Atlanta,

Georgia, for an interview with my presiding bishop, Arthur Moore. It was necessary for me to inform him that I was now out of the Army and ready to resume my work as a minister of the Florida Methodist Conference. When I explained the nature of my visit to Bishop Moore, he expressed his delight that I was available for an assignment, since there still existed a critical shortage of ministers.

"We have missed you very much from the pastorate," the bishop continued, "but we have not been sorry that you left us for service in the Army. It has always been my conviction that the church must follow its people wherever they go. We are proud that the Florida Methodist Conference sent more than forty of its active ministers into the military service of our country."

"It was a great service," I said, thanking the bishop for his gracious remarks, "and I would not exchange it for any other experience I know of. But I am now out of the Army and ready to go back to work in a civilian church. I came to ask if you have an appointment open at this time of the year."

The bishop nodded, "Yes, I am sure I can find a place for you. You must remember, though, that this is midyear in the conference. I can send you only to the charges that have been left without pastors. We can possibly make some adjustments at the conference this June."

"I understand that, Bishop," I responded. "All I ask is that you send me to a place with a parsonage for my wife and babies."

The bishop opened a drawer in his desk, took out a folder of charts and papers, and began thumbing through them. After a moment he paused and carefully read one page of the papers. Then he said to me, "I have only one charge free at this time that has a parsonage. I can send you there."

Eagerly I asked, "Where is it?"

"Florida City," he answered.

So it was settled that I would take myself and my family to Florida City as soon as possible. I didn't have the faintest idea where the place was except that it was in Florida. But what did that matter? I had a church in which to work, a home in which to live, and people to love. What more could I ask?

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*Former Chaplain,
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